

D. L. L.

A
PLAIN TALE
FOR
THE NEW PARLIAMENT;
OR
A SKETCH
OF
THE HISTORY OF ENGLAND,
FROM
THE CLOSE OF THE CAMPAIGN IN
1794,
TO THE PRESENT TIME.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
*"Letters to the King under the Signature of
" JUNIUS."*

A haughty minion, mad with empire grown,
Enslaves the subject, and insults the throne.

PART I.

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A PLAIN

A
PLAIN TALE
FOR
THE NEW PARLIAMENT,
 &c. &c.

I. **I**T would be inconsistent not only with the title, but the spirit of the following work, to amuse the reader at its opening by any idle flourishes, or the cant of artful insinuation. Every individual in the British empire must feel himself immediately and deeply concerned in the events, a sketch of which is here attempted. They want no studied forms of language to heighten their importance—no blaze of eloquence to spread over them a borrowed or imaginary splendor. They are in their own nature sufficiently interesting, and require only to be described with truth and simplicity, in order to command the most serious attention. A *plain tale* would rather be injured than assisted by prefatory remarks.

II. The campaign of 1794, so expensive in preparations, and so mortifying in its issue, afforded the minister but little ground either of triumph or

of confidence to meet the parliament on the last day but one of that disastrous year. Expert as he had often shewn himself in preparing speeches from the throne, he was now obliged to spread out the gold leaf of delusion so very thin, that it could not impose upon the most superficial observer. In vain were the French said to be "exhausted by the efforts which had led to their successes." The only idea, which so groundless and silly an assertion could excite, was this;—if France paid dearly for her victories, how much more dearly must not Great Britain and the other allies have paid for their unparalleled defeats and disgrace? In vain was that most insignificant of all bawbles, "the sceptre of Corsica," held out as some consolation for lord Hood's ignominious flight from Toulon, and for the loss of a far more valuable conquest, the island of Guadaloupe. The minister surely did not imagine, that the pride of Englishmen could be flattered by the glittering of an idiot's toy! In vain was an appeal made to the loyalty of the nation, by announcing "the conclusion of a treaty for the marriage of the Prince of Wales with the princess Caroline of Brunswick." The transports of public joy, with which such a message would otherwise have been received, were now damped by the calamitous circumstances of the times. In short, whatever way the friends of the country were directed by the minister to turn
their

their eyes, they sought in vain for a single ray of hope to brighten up or dispel the surrounding glooms. Yet, after long and warm debates on addresses of thanks in the usual strain, and on the policy, justice and necessity of a vigorous prosecution of the war, as well as the alledged impossibility of treating with the actual rulers of France, there were found only thirteen members in the upper house, and seventy three in the lower, who had the firmness and integrity to refuse their assent, or offer any amendment to a string of the most palpable falsehoods.

1795.—III. Such a division, upon the very first clash of parties, left but little hope that the minority could gather strength in any future contest. The frequency of their returns to the charge served only to display their zeal, their patriotism, their genius, their eloquence, and the weakness of all these when opposed to the influence of a minister. Mr. Sheridan had made an attempt, even before the king's speech was taken into consideration, to substitute for the mere form of reading the clandestine outlawry bill, a far more unequivocal test of the independence and liberty of the house in their deliberative capacity, by moving the repeal of the obnoxious and unconstitutional act of the last session, which had suspended the habeas corpus law, and destroyed one of the chief bulwarks of civil liberty and personal security. The failure of
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this effort did not discourage Mr. Sheridan from renewing it in a more regular manner on the fifth of January, being determined, he said, to allow no time to concert plans for exciting alarm,—no time to make fresh false accusations,—no time to marshal and arrange spies;—but to call at once upon ministers for their reasons for continuing to deprive the people of this country of their dearest rights, after every honest man was convinced that the whole story of plots and conspiracies was nothing but a wicked fabrication. The verdicts of repeated juries had negatived the existence of any traitorous plot: they did away the idea of that pretended conspiracy, which had been used as a plea for voting the suspension of the habeas corpus act: they rescued the country from the foul stain attempted to be fixed upon it by the promoters of the war. Irrefragable as the evidence of these truths may appear, the motion founded on them was supported by no more than 41 members out of 226 who voted on the occasion. The inequality was still greater when the suspension bill came to be renewed. It would have expired on the first of February; but the attorney-general anticipated that event, by moving, on the fifteenth of January, for leave to bring in a bill for its continuance. The principal debate took place at its second reading, on the twenty-third of the same month, when the force of numbers, not of argument, again decided the

the question, there being 230 for this abridgment of British liberty, against 53 who opposed it. Ministry, however, were completely driven off their first ground in support of the measure. The solicitor-general, as if stung with disappointment at the issue of the late trials, had the audacity to assert, *that the jury were not so well informed of the facts as he was, and that the verdicts only amounted to this, that the persons accused could not be tried again for the same crime.* Mr. Wyndham went farther, and called them *acquitted felons.* Public indignation was roused by so daring an attack on the most solemn decisions of different juries; and the minister found it expedient to have recourse to some other pretence. A new phrase was therefore employed to suit the new occasion; and the suspending of the habeas corpus act was said to be for the purpose of *preventing a disposition to moral guilt*,—a thing which had never before been heard of as an object of legislative precaution. In the passage of the bill through the house of lords, all that could be obtained by its strenuous opposers was an amendment, which the earl of Lauderdale suggested, limiting its operation to the first of July following, instead of *till the end of the session*, which would have put it in the power of the crown, by not proroguing parliament, to continue the suspension for an indefinite time. But the acquiescence of the ministry in this point

point did not prevent the noble earl, as well as the dukes of Bedford and Norfolk, from entering their protest against so *causeless an act of despotism*.

IV. It is probable that many even of the most vigilant patriots, however highly they value all the constitutional securities of Englishmen, would have felt less alarm at this temporary suspension of the habeas corpus act, had they not seen the same arbitrary spirit pervading other parts of the ministerial system, and discovering itself openly in some regulations which were introduced into the military establishments of the kingdom. A regular plan seemed to be pursued for gradually assimilating the militia to a standing army, and for rendering the latter more and more dependent on the bounty of the crown. On the sixth of March, Mr. Wyndham moved for a committee to prepare an estimate of the charges of certain additional allowances to be made to subaltern militia officers in time of peace. This measure was finally adopted, though Mr. Fox, Mr. Sheridan, general Tarleton, and a few more, exposed in the clearest manner its tendency to increase the patronage of the minister, —to establish a military government,—and to destroy one of the fundamental distinctions between the militia and the army. Officers did not enter into the former with the hope or prospect of making a fortune : they could only be employed when the country was in danger ; and the pay they received

ceived during the time of actual duty was not a remuneration for their services, but a compensation for the expence of their attendance. These principles were now disregarded, and the militia were put upon the same footing as the army, there being no difference, in point of substance, between half-pay, and a provision in time of peace, for services in time of war.

V. The bill also for new-modelling the London militia, the third reading of which took place on the thirtieth of March, left no doubt that the views of administration were directed to the same object, the melting down, as it were, of all the military bodies in the kingdom into one common mass of vassalage or dependance. This bill, as Mr. Sheridan observed, was a direct infringement on the chartered rights and military privileges of the citizens. He contended that the city of London had possessed, from time immemorial, the right of commanding and keeping at home its own militia; and he defied any man to produce an instance wherein the king had commanded their services by proclamation, as he usually commanded the other militia regiments. Mr. Sheridan did not object to the raising of the proposed number of men for the defence of the city, with this proviso, that they should not be considered as abolishing the old militia; and that the trained-bands and their new auxiliaries should enjoy their ancient rights and

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privileges. But Mr. Lushington, who had lately taken his seat for the city, and had directly ranged himself under the minister's banner, betrayed the grand secret of the scheme by his intemperate defence of it. He said *the old military privileges of London had been absurdly maintained as one of the* GOTHIC PREJUDICES *of our ancestors; and he thought the defence of the city would be better intrusted to experienced officers, than placed in the hands of the magistrates.* Mr. Sheridan's reply was in a strain of the happiest irony and the most penetrating keenness. He congratulated the citizens of London on the valuable acquisition of a representative, who began his parliamentary career by an attack on their chartered rights, and who ridiculed the maintenance of their old military privileges as one of the *Gothic* prejudices of our ancestors. It might be so, our ancestors had many such *Gothic* prejudices. They had a *Gothic* prejudice against a standing army: they had a *Gothic* prejudice against the erection of barracks: they had a *Gothic* notion of governing the city by the civil power, without the assistance of the military; and, even in less *Gothic* times, a BECKFORD had proved the fact. Nay, in this new and *ungothic* age, the present chief magistrate [SKINNER] had preserved the peace, in times *said to be dangerous*, by the civil power alone; for neither old trained-bands nor new militia existed to assist him. But after the doctrine

doctrine which he had just heard with equal shame and indignation, he would not be surpris'd if the honourable gentleman were to move for the erection of barracks round the Royal Exchange. The whole measure he considered "as a juggle between the craft of despotism and the laziness of commercial luxury; and the result was the surrender of a great and proud distinction, which had been preserved with the greatest jealousy for many ages; accompanied with a mean acknowledgment, that the city of London was no longer capable, without military aid, of preserving its own internal peace, much less of disputing the encroachments of power, should such a crisis arrive." Mr. Sheridan having satisfied his own mind in stating his opinions, declined giving the house the useless trouble of a division on the subject.

VI. Other innovations were afterwards made under the pretence of augmenting the royal corps of artillery, and providing for the navy seafaring men out of the militia. A bill, which had been brought in for these purposes, was soon moulded into such a form as shewed very evidently, that the increase of the power of the crown, not the improvement of the public service, was the ruling principle. Among the clauses laid before a committee of the whole house by Mr. Pitt, on the twenty-third of April, there was one for investing the crown with the power of dismissing militia of-

ficers at discretion. General Macleod spoke against the clause with becoming warmth. He reminded gentlemen of the eloquent invective, which the dismissal of a general officer in the standing army had provoked from the late earl of Chatham. If such a circumstance in the *standing army* appeared so extraordinary and so reprehensible, what should be said of the militia, the *constitutional army* of the country, and the great barrier against the standing army, should the latter ever be made the engine of arbitrary power? By this clause any militia officer, however distinguished for his talents, independency, and public spirit, should he chance to oppose the views of the treasury at the election of a member of parliament, might be dismissed from the service of his country, without assigning any reason for such dismissal. A majority of almost six to one completely refuted this argument, though in other respects unanswerable; and the clause passed. But the very principle and operation of the bill were attacked with no less poignancy by the earl of Radnor, at the second reading in the house of lords on the twenty-second of May. He did not deny the necessity of assisting and reinforcing the artillery corps, in a war like the present: he said the militia had been looked to for this purpose, and a meeting of the officers had been held to take the subject into consideration, in which certain resolutions had been agreed upon, to
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the effect of tendering to government their assistance in training men to the artillery service : but he insisted that undue advantages had been taken of this offer, as the bill authorized the taking away all men who had, by the zeal of their commanders, been fully trained for artillery duty. The bill was further injurious to the militia service, by allowing all privates, who were on any account dissatisfied, to secede from it on the plea of having been bred to the sea, or of wishing to be enrolled in the royal artillery corps. This must, he observed, injure the discipline of the militia. The effect of allowing one in ten of the privates to be discharged into the corps of artillery, might amount to so large a number as very seriously to thin the ranks, and lessen the strength of the constitutional force : and with regard to the clause empowering commanding officers to raise volunteers in the room of those so discharged, *by beat of drum*, instead of the established method of supplying any deficiency *by ballot*, his lordship thought it a mischievous attempt to alter the constitutional mode of recruiting the militia. Other objections were suggested by the marquis of Buckingham and Lord Romney ; but when the house came to divide on the question for the second reading, the contents were 23, the not contents 6. It is almost unnecessary to add, that the farther progress of the bill could receive but little check from so small a number of opponents.

VII. None

VII. None of these steps, however, afforded so clear a proof of the designs of the ministry to establish an entire military government, as the building of barracks all over the kingdom, and the distribution of donations among the soldiers at the public expence, but without the consent or knowledge of those, who alone ought to have the command and disposal of the public purse. Some striking instances of the latter kind were brought forward for the consideration of parliament by general Macleod, whose exertions in an affair of such peculiar delicacy fully confirmed his former claims to the gratitude and applause of his country. The manner in which he introduced the business was equally modest and candid. He had given previous notice of his intention to submit to the house a few remarks on an extra-allowance lately granted to non-commissioned officers and privates by his majesty's directions; and he had not the least doubt but the importance of the subject would now obtain for him a patient hearing. He held it to be a grand principle of the English constitution, that the king had no right to issue orders for the payment of any sums of money, which were afterwards to come out of the public purse of the nation, without the consent of parliament. He knew he was about to tread on delicate ground, but it should only be with the greatest respect that he should mention the name of his majesty.

majesty. There was another royal personage also, to whose name he should have occasion to allude; and, before he did so, he begged to assure the house, that no one could entertain a higher esteem for the duke of York than he did; but he thought his name had been made use of in a very singular manner, in order to cover ministers from acts for which they ought to be, and he believed were, responsible.—He then read a circular letter, which had been sent from the duke of York to the war-office, dated the eighteenth of April, the purport of which was, “ That his majesty had given orders, and he noticed the same to the secretary at war, in order that he might transmit letters to the different general officers commanding regiments, that, on account of the very high price of provisions, the soldiers should not pay more than four pence halfpenny per pound for meat, but that all above that sum should be made good out of the public purse.” He said, he thought it necessary to observe to the house, that the first step which had been taken in this business was at the commencement of the present calamitous and disastrous war, when his majesty issued orders, first that three halfpence, and soon after that an additional penny a day extraordinary should be allowed to each soldier for bread money. This was done at a time when parliament was not sitting, and so far might, in some degree, be deemed excusable :

cusable: but the late orders which had been issued with regard to meat for the soldiers, was during the sitting of parliament, which rendered them in the highest degree unconstitutional and dangerous.

More TREASON AGAINST THE CONSTITUTION could not well be uttered, than was contained in the five or six lines of the order in the circular letter he had just before read to the house. After dwelling a little longer on this point, the general entered into a calculation of the amount of the extras. He supposed he was greatly under the mark, when he stated the army in this island at 100,000 men, in which case the allowance for bread and fundries at the commencement of the war would somewhat exceed 380,000*l.* Of the late allowance for meat it was impossible to make any precise or definitive estimate; but if added to the continuance of a penny a day extraordinary for bread, the total of both certainly would not fall short of the former sum. The general did not think these allowances more than the exigency of the times demanded: but he contended, that it was not constitutional for the executive branch of government to grant money for the support of the army, without the knowledge and consent of parliament. The very existence of the army, from year to year, depended on the breath of parliament, that passed the mutiny act. The name of his royal highness, the commander in chief, had been abused to an
unconstitutional

unconstitutional purpose. Why did not some of the ministers tell his highness, that the measure in question was unconstitutional?—A simple mandate from the secretary at war,—scarcely so much,—an order by a clerk of the war-office, counter-signed, indeed, afterwards, by the secretary at war, had laid a burthen on this country of near a million sterling! This burthen was laid, not in the recess, but during the sitting of parliament, as if a studied insult had been intended, or a precedent sought, by which ministers might at any time take the money of the people without the consent of their representatives. The mode, in which these allowances were made, had a tendency to impress the soldiers with a conviction, and the corresponding sentiments, that they depended for every comfort and *douceur*, not on the virtue and patriotism of their fellow subjects, but on the royal bounty. Some handsome addition to the pay of the army was loudly demanded by the increased price of all necessaries; but it should be made in a constitutional manner. By the present mode, three great disadvantages or grievances were incurred:—first, the people paid an additional tax:—2dly, the price of provisions was enhanced, by the certainty the butchers had, that the soldiers could have no other interest than to pay any price that was demanded; and thus too a distinction and rivalry were established between the army and men in civil

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stations:—3dly, what was worst of all, it was by such strides of the executive power over the popular and aristocratical barriers of the constitution, in almost every country in Europe that the people, fell, helpless, though often voluntary, slaves, into the hands of courts. The general enforced these and a variety of other arguments with the utmost ardour of patriotism and energy of language: he pointed out the danger that must arise from the accumulation of such precedents: he shewed how glorious an attainment it would be, and how salutary to the constitution, if the additional allowance to the army could be suspended, *if but for one half hour*, until it should be confirmed and sanctioned by the voice of parliament: he therefore moved for a committee of the whole house to take those circular orders into consideration, intimating, at the same time, that if this motion should be acquiesced in, he meant to propose two resolutions to the committee;—the first declaring it to be the opinion of the house, that it was contrary to the principles of the British constitution in his majesty's ministers to advise him to augment the pay of the forces, without previously consulting, or afterwards submitting such a measure to, parliament; and the second in the form of an humble address to his majesty, praying him to order to be laid before the house the causes of the grants, and assuring him of the readiness of parliament to concur in making

making every necessary provision in a constitutional manner. The motion was seconded with great ability by Mr. Courtenay, whose quotation of the following remark in Gibbon's History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire seemed exactly to hit the sore or vulnerable part of some of the minister's hirelings : " By imperial donatives every sense of honour and duty was eradicated from the breast of a soldier, and every legion looked up to the Emperor as their tutelary Deity."—Mr. Wyndham, the Secretary at War, made a long speech in reply ; but all the resources of his ingenuity and his sophistry could afford no better excuse for such an unconstitutional step, than *the urgency of the occasion* ;—a plea the most frivolous that could well be imagined, as Parliament was sitting at the time, and the measure took place not only without their consent, but even without the notification of a message. Mr. Pitt displayed more address, or rather more hackneyed subtlety in defence of a charge that would have covered any honest man with confusion. He strove to involve the question in difficulties which did not belong to it : he laid great stress on the alledged inaccuracy of the General's calculations ; and after thus endeavouring to divert attention from the main point, he slightly observed, that whatever the expenditure might be, it came under the head of other various extraordinaries, for which the *subsequent sanction* of the house would be

resorted to.—In the first place, this was defending a bad principle by a false assertion. The general's estimate did not exceed, but fell short of the reality. Besides, the precise amount of the expence, however considerable, was not of so much weight as the principle which it tended to maintain. It was a direct invasion of the essential privilege of parliament, and for the worst and most dangerous of all purposes, to secure the attachment of the army to the crown, in contradistinction to the house of commons, by making them consider the crown as the source of every advantage they enjoyed, or expected to enjoy. As to the pretence of resorting to the *subsequent sanction* of the house, it was a mere mockery. To say nothing of the pre-secured votes of an obsequious majority, the house might have no choice then left. After the money was spent, their sanction might be an act of necessity, at least of policy : for suppose, as Mr. Francis put the case, that the house, on serious consideration of the subject, should refuse to give their sanction,—should refuse to provide for the expence already incurred, or should order it to be immediately stopped, what situation would they stand in then ? On one side the crown would entitle itself to the gratitude and affections of the army, by acts of bounty, liberality, and patronage ; while, on the other, the house of commons would necessarily become the object of their hatred, and possibly of their revenge. But
Mr.

Mr. Pitt could behold with perfect unconcern this and all the other possible consequences of the measure, though fully illustrated by Mr. Fox, Mr. Grey, general Tarleton, and the speakers already mentioned. It seemed, however, as if the ministerialists were ashamed to put a direct negative on the proposed inquiry: they got rid of it by moving the previous question, for which they had a majority of 67 against 22.

VIII. The farther exertions of this small band of patriots, and of their friends in the upper house, proved equally ineffectual to procure any redress of public grievances, or to stem the torrent of public calamity. They could not, indeed, flatter themselves with the least expectation of success in their endeavours for the attainment of peace, when the very "disappointments and reverses, which had been experienced in the course of the last campaign," were urged in the speech from the throne as a reason for "persisting in the vigorous prosecution of the war*." A sense of duty alone prompted them to renew such hopeless efforts. Lord Stanhope took the lead, and on the sixth of January moved the following excellent resolution,

* In a speech from the throne, on the twenty-fifth of November 1762, a series of victories, unparalleled both in *glory* and in *advantage*, was stated as an argument for making peace. It would be an insult on the reader's good sense to suggest to him the proper comment on such contradictory modes of reasoning.

"that

“ that this country ought not, and will not, interfere in the internal affairs of France ; and that it is expedient explicitly to declare the same.” The minority lords, though perfectly in unison with him in point of principle, thought the motion not worded with sufficient temper, and therefore voted for the adjournment, but giving notice that the subject would again be brought forward in a less exceptionable form.

IX. On the twenty-sixth of the same month, Mr. Grey called forth all the powers of a vigorous and enlightened mind in urging the house of commons to declare it as their opinion, “ that the existence of the present government of France ought not to be considered as precluding at this time a negociation for peace.” He placed the justice, the expedience, the sound policy, and the real dignity of this sentiment in so strong a light,—he made so animated and so impressive an appeal to the wisdom and virtue of the house, that if those whom he addressed really were what they professed themselves to be, the genuine and honest representatives of the people, there would not have been one dissenting voice upon a point thus intimately connected with the happiness and salvation of the country. The minister did not dare to meet the question fairly: he evaded it by moving an amendment to this effect; “ that, under the present circumstances, the house felt itself called upon to declare a determination

mination to prosecute the war as the only means of procuring a permanent and secure peace, relying on his majesty's intention vigorously to employ the force and resources of this country in support of its essential interests, and on the desire uniformly manifested by him to effect a pacification with any government in France, under whatever form, which shall appear capable of maintaining the accustomed relations of peace and amity with other countries." The only aim of such an equivocal amendment was to delude the public at large by a shew of concession which meant nothing;—to gain over a few votes of irresolute members in the house;—and to lull a few individuals into a continuance of their apathy. Mr. Wilberforce wished to substitute in its room a more explicit avowal, "that the existence of any particular form of government in France ought not to preclude such a peace between the two countries as should be consistent with the safety, honour, and interests of Great Britain." Mr. Fox was not so tender or so delicate on the subject. He exposed the unmanly, disingenuous conduct of the minister with the strongest flashes of just indignation. He observed, that when Mr. Grey's motion was originally announced about three weeks before, and the precise words of it were stated to the house, Mr. Pitt pledged himself to come to issue upon those words; instead of which he had now recourse to delusion and quibbling :

bling: he found that he must soften and lower his language;—that he must attempt to do away the effects of that absurd, impolitic, and, it might be said, diabolical speech, which he had put into the mouth of his majesty, in which our gracious sovereign had been made to stand between heaven and the happiness of mankind,—had been made to fix the doom of millions, and to pronounce an almost eternal war, for no possible purpose of rational benefit to his species.—Mr. Fox was not less pointed in his reply to Mr. Pitt's arguments for the continuance of the war,—those trite, hackneyed, and refuted arguments, with which the house had been fatigued so often, yet were again renewed: “but,” said Mr. Fox, “there has been so much novelty in the right honourable gentleman's action this day, that he has not thought it necessary to introduce any novelty into his reasoning.” The same language may be very properly employed in asserting, that there was nothing novel in the decision of the house on the subject, Mr. Grey's motion being rejected by 269 Noes against 86 Ayes, and Mr. Pitt's amendment approved of, in preference to Mr. Wilberforce's, by 254 Ayes against 90 Noes. After the minister's resolution had passed in the affirmative, Mr. Sheridan moved another to be added to it, stating, “that the house were *not* of opinion, that there were circumstances in the present government of France which precluded all negotiation,

negotiation, or rendered it incapable of maintaining the accustomed relations of peace and amity." But this was withdrawn, after some debate.

X. Next day the duke of Bedford moved in the house of lords, that no form of government, which may prevail in France, should preclude a negotiation with that country, or prevent a peace, whenever it could be made consistently with the interest, honour, and security of Great Britain. This motion was so admirably drawn up to obviate all former objections, and was so well supported by his grace, and by several of his eloquent friends, that the lords in administration seemed almost reduced to an incapacity of reply. Their speeches were little more than echos of the shuffling, evasive language made use of on the preceding day in the house of commons by Mr. Pitt; and an amendment in precisely the same words as his was proposed by lord Grenville, and carried by a majority of 88 against 15.

XI. Similar attempts were soon renewed in both houses with a degree of perseverance in one party, which could only be equalled by the invincible obstinacy of the other. On the sixth of February, Mr. Grey submitted to the lower house a resolution, founded on the avowed object of the war, which was to restore to these kingdoms the blessings of an equitable peace, and amounting simply to an acknowledgement of a competent power in

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France to negotiate and conclude a treaty for that purpose. Mr. Dundas moved the previous question, for which there appeared 190 against 60. A motion made by the duke of Bedford six days after in the upper house, and directed to the same object, the removal of a lasting bar to negotiation, was got rid of in the very same manner, the previous question being moved, and carried in the affirmative by a majority (including proxies) of 101 against 15.

XII. After the failure of such efforts, it was not likely that Mr. Wilberforce's catch at popularity by affecting to become an advocate for peace, would extort a recantation of their errors from those men, with whom he had often concurred in maintaining the justice and necessity of the war. He seemed willing, however, to make the experiment; and, on the twenty-seventh of May, moved the house to resolve "that the present circumstances ought not to preclude the British government from entertaining proposals for a general pacification, and that it was for the interest of Great Britain to make peace with France, if it could be fairly and honourably effected." The force of his arguments in support of this motion was very much weakened by several misplaced eulogiums on the talents, integrity, judgment, and general capacity of the minister, whom he professed to look up to as the most proper person to conduct the business of

of the state. There was so much inconsistency in blending such panegyrics with a dictate to that very minister on one of the most important duties of government, that it could not well be overlooked in any reply to Mr. Wilberforce's motion. But, what appeared rather curious, the charge of inconsistency and rashness, *if not something worse*, was brought against him by Mr. Wyndham, who asked him, whether he thought the minister, after all these eulogiums, would authorize him to perform his functions for him?—or, on what grounds he could pretend to withhold his confidence from a minister whom he acknowledged to be so fit for his office?—How he came to differ in opinion from those with whom he had uniformly voted?—And, whether he was not afraid of the company with whom he now ventured to associate?—In urging these interrogatories, it never once occurred to Mr. Wyndham, that he himself was a deserter from his former friends;—that he himself had apostatized from his ancient creed;—that he himself was an upstart on the bench on which he sat;—and that of the majority, which he expected in his favour that evening, a great proportion would be composed of those with whom he had been accustomed to differ in sentiment. Mr. Wyndham, in the course of his reply, was hurried into some other intemperate expressions, which betrayed the shallowness of his political knowledge,

as well as the insolence and folly of his visionary triumphs. Speaking of the French, "their fortune," said he, "has reached its flood, and is now ebbing fast away. The symptoms of decay are manifest, and the pulse that raged so violently will soon no longer beat."—The campaign of 1796 is the best comment on the figurative jargon of this state quack; but his opinions were unfortunately countenanced by a vast majority of the house at that time, 201 members out of 287 voting with him for the order of the day.

XIII. It is somewhat remarkable that, in this and every other instance where the public good was the object in view, Mr. Wilberforce's eloquence, like that of his right honourable friend, the minister, should make little impression on the house; but that the votes and motions of both should always have a decisive influence, when they tended to increase the burthens or to abridge the liberties of their fellow subjects. The truth of the latter part of this observation is fully illustrated in the ready assent given to new loans, new taxes, new restrictions; and, in proof of the former part, we need only refer to the rejection of Mr. Pitt's plan of parliamentary reform, the failure of his bill for meliorating the condition of the poor, and the inefficacy of his harangues to recommend the abolition of the slave trade. Mr. Wilberforce had renewed the discussion of this subject about
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three months before, [Feb. 26] but, after a long debate, he and Mr. Pitt were left in a minority of 61 against 78.

XIV. On the same evening that Mr. Wilberforce laid before the house of commons his proposal for opening the door to any pacific overtures, a similar step was intended to be taken in the house of lords by the earl of Lauderdale; but a temporary indisposition obliged him to defer it till the fifth of June. He then moved an address to the king, stating in the most persuasive language such important considerations as might induce his majesty speedily to use every honourable and expedient means for restoring the necessary blessings of peace. But though his lordship may be said to have pleaded his country's cause with "lips of fire," all his patriotic ardour could not kindle the same virtuous glow in the breasts of many of his hearers. On a division of the house, the contents, or approvers of the address, were only 8, the not contents 53.

XV. In this review of the various motions that were directed to the same point, little more seemed necessary than to mark the spirit, and to describe the result of each. But the pen of history requires much wider scope to do some justice to the exertions of Mr. Fox on a question of the utmost magnitude and importance, embracing at once every topic of policy, commerce, population, and revenue,

revenue, which was connected with the prosperity or existence of the state. As the minister, in his opposition to proposals of a peaceful tendency, had always endeavoured to amuse both the parliament and the people by proud boasts of our immense resources, and bold assertions of the certainty of ultimate success in the war, Mr. Fox was determined to make a grand effort to bring these assertions to the fairest test,—to expose the fallacy of such wicked boasts,—to hunt the minister through all the dark windings of state craft, and of subtle evasion,—and to open the eyes of the public to the dreadful abyss on the brink of which they now stood, and into which they must soon be irrecoverably plunged by an obstinate adherence to the present system. In conformity, therefore, to due notice previously given of his intentions, Mr. Fox, on the twenty-fourth of March, moved “that the house should resolve itself into a committee to inquire into the state of the nation.”

XVI. This solemn mode of inquiry, ought not, the orator observed, to be resorted to, but in cases of peculiar emergency; and such he esteemed the present. Whatever differences of opinion might prevail concerning the general state of Europe, no man, he thought, would be hardy enough to deny that the dangers, which impended over this country, were many and great; and, at such a crisis,
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the commons would not do their duty to their constituents, if they afforded confidence to any administration, but on the strongest grounds, and the firmest conviction of its integrity and competence to the change. He had introduced a similar motion in the year 1777, after the surrender at Saratoga; and though the majority then differed from him as to the cause of the misfortunes of the country, they did not think it consistent with the dignity or duty of the house, at so awful a moment, to decline going into an inquiry, by which all the strength of our means would be fairly compared with the justice and value of the object to be obtained, and a retrospect would be taken of the conduct of those who were intrusted with our affairs. But how trifling and insignificant were the perils of that moment compared with those which now threatened every part of the empire. “ Besides,” said Mr. Fox, “ a spirit of discontent is diffused through the country,—not arising from the influence of French principles,—but the natural effect of a system of misfortune and disgrace. The number of dissatisfied minds is daily increasing; nor do they conceal the cause. They assert, that this house is not the representative of the people,—not even virtually the representative of the people,—neither taking upon itself the guardianship of their rights, nor shewing the smallest alacrity in the superintendence of their interests. If then such an opinion has gone forth, what better argument

argument can the persons have, who are desirous of gaining profelytes and of spreading the dissatisfaction which they feel, than to say that, even at such a moment as the present, the house of commons not only can sit still, without bringing the executive government to account for the millions of money which have been squandered, and the oceans of blood which have been spilt, but can resist a motion for inquiring into the measures which have uniformly produced such calamity and disasters? This argument will be greatly strengthened by the known fact, that the general wish of the people is for peace; and that even those who were originally the loudest and most vehement declaimers for the justice and necessity of the war, are now eager for opening the door to an immediate negociation. If the house, then, should pay no regard to the change of public opinion, but should maintain a blind and implicit confidence in ministers, and be ready, without any inquiry into their past conduct, to support them in the prosecution of the most ruinous hostilities, must it not give uncommon force to the assertion, that the house is in reality lost to all the functions for which it was designed? In what way, except by invidious distinctions and declamations against the present ministry, will the admirers of the British constitution be now able to defend it? How can they say that it is essentially good, when it suffers such a
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train of misfortunes, not merely without punishment, but without inquiry? What can be brought in excuse for the supineness of this house; or what possible answer can be given to the just charge of our reliquishing our duty, and of our resisting the general voice of the people? Can that constitution be essentially good, where less attention is paid to the people even than in arbitrary governments? I have always thought that the best defence of the constitution was not, that it tallied with the theories of speculative men; nor that in its letter there was more appearance of regard to the abstract ideas of liberty:—but its best defence is its practical uses:—its best character is, that it has produced substantial happiness to man. Take away this argument, and leave it to those who are dissatisfied with our government to call upon its defenders to look at its practice, and to say that our executive government has gone on for two years in a system which involved an expence of blood and treasure beyond comparison,—in pursuit of an object which they have never explained,—by measures which have uniformly failed,—in which every one event has been marked by disaster, or disgrace, or by both; and that, at the end of this time, the house of commons abets the government in the continuance of the same course;—it will be in vain to contend that the beauty of the constitution can be illustrated by its practice. Must it not naturally

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occur, if this constitution be practically good, what constitution can be practically bad? What is the true character of a bad government? That the measures of a prince, though wicked and flagitious, may be persevered in for a time against the interests of his people. This, however, is not always true; for the most despotic princes have not always been able to keep their ministers against the indignation of the country. But if it be possible for the ministers of Great Britain to persevere in their measures, under such a series of disasters as we have suffered, not only without responsibility, but even without injury, then the most just accusation against despotic governments will be applicable to this; and thus the advocates for the British constitution will be deprived of their very best argument in its defence. Were I, therefore, to do nothing but state to the house that we have been now two years engaged in a war, in every part of which we have failed,—in which all our measures have been disastrous,—in which we have lost the object for which we at first pretended to undertake the war;—and in which our enemies have gained more than the wildest imaginations of those who drove us into it ever ascribed either to their ambition or to their principles,—I think I should require no further inducements to prevail on a house of commons, eager to discharge its duty,

duty, to go into a committee on the state of the nation."

XVII. It was, indeed, impossible to make a stronger appeal to any member of the house, in whom corruption had not extinguished all sense of public shame as well as of public duty. But Mr. Fox did not content himself with this general argument: he took a particular view of each branch of the proposed inquiry, and endeavoured in a strain of the most commanding eloquence to fix the attention of his hearers on the true grounds of every national misfortune. He held out, as the grand objects of investigation, the resources of the country, and the probability of their being employed with effect. These again he subdivided into a variety of heads; 1st, our population, money, trade, and manufactures; 2dly. our connections with foreign states, the will and power of our allies to serve the common cause; and 3dly. the principle of the war, and our conduct in it, to which all eyes would be naturally turned. If it should appear, as ministers asserted, that we had entered upon the war with spirit, and had conducted it with temper and prudence, the result would be absolute despair. Upon this view, an inquiry must be favourable to ministers. "Admit this position," said Mr. Fox, "and the confidence, which has been given to them, will be justified.

If they have acted with wisdom and vigour, it will be manifest that the cause of failure lay in the principle itself, not in them. But if they have not acted with wisdom and vigour, it will be seen that the principle was good, though the conduct has been defective. In a measure which involves so deeply the dearest interests of mankind, it is surely of importance to ascertain this essential truth before we proceed any farther."

XVIII. With respect to the first branch of the inquiry, Mr. Fox declared his intention, if the house should go into a committee, to move for a complete and accurate account of our loss of men by the war. A paper had been laid on the table, said to be a return of the British loss, but which was obviously defective in many particulars; for, comparing it even with the occasional reports made in the London Gazette, a vehicle for which he had not the highest reverence, considerable differences would be detected. He pointed out many instances of this sort, adding that a correct statement of all the varieties of shape and form, in which death had been presented to our unfortunate countrymen, would convince the house that we had already suffered such a diminution as the state of the population of Great Britain could not recruit. This was not all;—it was not merely the loss of British troops;—it was not the horrible considera-
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tion of the slaughter of our fellow-subjects only;—but the mortality of our allies also, that the committee would have to ascertain. Was it true, he asked, as had been asserted in the only documents which we received of the proceedings in France, that more than sixty thousand men had surrendered as prisoners of war in the last campaign? If this was true, it surely ought to instigate that house to an inquiry, before they proceeded farther in a war so calamitous. What must the amount of the mortality be, if sixty thousand men were made prisoners? Ought not the state of British population to be ascertained as clearly as possible, before the house consented to new drains of blood?—

XIX. The next argument respecting our resources was, that in the course of the present war we had already funded sixty millions, besides an unfunded debt of near ten millions more. We had raised taxes little short of three millions perpetual burthen on the people. What was the extent of the burthens to be imposed next year? Before we rashly plunged into new expences, we should be satisfied of the ability of the people to bear the load, and we should compare it with the benefits we hoped to secure to them by these exertions.

XX. It was said that our resources were supported by the manufactures and trade of the country,

try, and that these were in a flourishing condition. But he would ask gentlemen best acquainted with the manufacturing districts of the kingdom, if they had not already been considerably injured by the war? He had seen papers, which had carried the diminution of trade and the decrease of population in Lancashire to an astonishing extent. It was the duty of the house to inquire whether these statements were well founded or not. One fact was indisputable, that the export of British manufactures decreased in 1793 to the amount of four millions. In 1794, it got up again about two millions; but this was to be ascribed solely to the spirit of adventure or of sanguine speculation respecting conquered islands in the West Indies, and which neither would nor could be continued. Our maritime trade was in reality unable to bear the enormous weight of insurance. At no period of the last war, when we had to contend with France, Spain, Holland, and America, was insurance higher than at this moment.

XXI. Our next point of resource was our foreign allies. He wished to know who they were! Was the king of Prussia our ally? Did he fulfil the treaty for which the subsidy was paid him? If he did fulfil it, why did we cease to pay that subsidy? Why had we broken the contract? Surely parliament ought to inquire into, and ascertain this point. Let the house do their duty, and render justice

justice to that monarch: let them declare, that ministers have acted towards him with treachery; or let them express their indignation at the scandalous breach of contract which he has committed; and let them shew to the nations of Europe, that, faithful to their own engagements, they will not submit to be the dupes of any potentate on earth. Our connection with Prussia was to be viewed in another light also. If he was no longer our ally, what had become of the treaty in 1788? By that treaty, he was obliged to furnish 30,000 men. It had been made the ground for justifying the treaty of 1793, that his former engagement extending only to a supply of 30,000 men, it was good policy to give him a subsidy of twelve hundred thousand pounds for furnishing double the number. What followed? He left the allies in the middle of the campaign; and by our second bargain for an increase of his services, we lost them totally. Was a British house of commons to lavish enormous sums of money only to purchase the breach of treaties,—to procure the violation of engagements, leading, in their consequences, to the destruction of all the measures in which we were engaged. They had read such various accounts of his present proceedings, as made it still more necessary to inquire into the fact. They had heard of his sending armies again to the Rhine; and they had heard that he considered the Rhine as a proper boundary for

for France. It was said by some that his armies were marching against the French, and by others that he was marching against the allies. They ought to know precisely what he was, whether he was an ally, whether he was neutral, or whether he was an enemy. An honourable gentleman [sir William Pulteney] had said, that “ the king of Prussia, during the last campaign, did us better service, than by direct co-operation with the allied armies.” Perhaps his Prussian majesty might explain and prove the assertion thus: he might say, that the war having been undertaken for the demolition of Jacobin principles, which set themselves up against regular governments like his, he had rendered more service to the allies by his attack upon Poland, than he could by any other means: he might say, what signified the capture of a town, the recovery of a fortress, or the protection of a province, compared with the great achievements which he had performed in Poland? Had he not crushed the rise of Jacobin principles among that abominable people? He had reduced them to that condition of slavery which was consistent with, and safe for, the *regular governments!* What signified the recovery of Flanders, or the preservation of Holland, when opposed to the capture of Kosciuszko?—to the overthrow of that distinguished man, whose courage and talents had excited the sympathy of every congenial breast, and

and whose example warmed every generous soul to the great and sacred duty of the melioration of the condition of his kind! The king of Prussia might say, that he had thus done more for the *real* cause, rendered more service to the *real* object of the confederacy, than by any co-operation with their troops! If so, it was manifest we had given 1,200,000*l.* to subdue Poland. Unless we had granted him the subsidy, he could have done nothing, by his own confession. If we had not given him the sum, he would have done for us just as much as he had done—that was *nothing*. If he was to be considered as our ally, he must again be subsidized. We must either, therefore, look upon him as an ally gone off, or as an ally to be hired, unless, indeed, we were even to be obliged to purchase his neutrality.—With respect to the emperor, we were to give him four or six millions, whichever he pleased to accept; and if he should imitate the example set him of withdrawing in the middle of the campaign, *we* could not withdraw also, as we were to advance the whole sum at once, and thus to deprive ourselves of all power of check on his conduct. But the most material consideration was, that if he could not take the field this year without so enormous a loan, he would be equally incapable of taking it next year without another loan; and thus Great Britain was to sustain the whole burthen of the war. Though

large subsidies were paid to the Italian princes, we scarcely heard of a movement in that country; and as to Sardinia, would not its neutrality have been as serviceable to us as the diversion it had made? Spain had lost Navarre, Biscay, and Catalonia; and her finances were in such a state, that she must either apply for a subsidy, or make a separate peace with the enemy. All this undoubtedly called for inquiry, that we might ascertain what precise dependance we ought to have on the exertions of our allies.

XXII. It was also of importance to inquire whether we stood high in the estimation of neutral states, for our rectitude, dignity, moderation, and justice. These ought to be ranked among the number of our resources; and no man would deny the eternal truth of the principle, that, if we had been deficient in justice, we had been deficient in wisdom, and had thereby enfeebled our arm, and taken from the vital strength of the country. With respect to America, after taking her ships, we had agreed to pay for the damage she had sustained. To the court of Denmark we had sent memorial after memorial complaining of her neutrality; the answers to which had raised the character of Mr. Bernstoff higher than that of any Danish minister before him. We had engaged in a diplomatic contest, in which we shewed ourselves completely ignorant of the laws of nations, and

and were foiled accordingly. After having by menace and insult compelled the duke of Tuscany to declare war, contrary to his own inclination, the advice of his ministers, and the interests of his subjects, we were at last obliged to submit not only to his neutrality, but to his concluding a treaty of peace and amity with the French convention. We had insolently told the independent cantons of Switzerland, that, although they might chuse to call themselves neutral, they were not to allow their subjects to reap the advantages of that neutrality by any intercourse with the people of France. The Swiss returned a dignified answer, *that they would preserve a neutrality which his Britannic majesty had often commended, and even acknowledged as an obligation.* Our conduct and language to the little republic of Genoa had been still more unbecoming; but, after blockading the port, we were content to withdraw our ships, with an ungracious apology for the insult we had offered. Thus had ministers impaired the character of the nation, and brought upon it, what it had never known before, the imputation of injustice and pusillanimity.

XXIII. Their disingenuity, in having never avowed the specific object of the war, he deemed equally impolitic and mean spirited. "If," said Mr. Fox, "they had thought or acted like statesmen, they would have told the world, *we care not*

*what the government of France may be, we are fighting to repel an unprovoked aggression, and to protect our allies the Dutch; or, they would have adopted the idea of a late distinguished member of this house, who, by an odd figure *, said, the object of the war was not the defence of the Dutch, but the restoration of monarchy in France,—the restoration of the emigrants to their property,—and the re-establishment of ancient institutions; because, unless all this was done, his majesty was not safe upon his throne,—no gentleman could be assured of his estate,—nor any religious or civil establishment be free from danger. Either side of the alternative would have had its inconveniencies. If we had taken the former, and said that we sought only indemnity for ourselves, and security for our allies, without regarding what might be the form of government in France, we should have had no pretence for expecting aid from French emigrants, or from insurgents in any part of France, except as far as they might be supposed to facilitate our operations abroad, by embarrassing the ruling powers at home. We should have had no right to look for the co-operation of those powers whose object was the restoration of monarchy in France. But*

* The figurative expression here alluded to, which Mr. Fox through delicacy did not repeat, had been made use of in a former debate by Mr. Burke, whose exact words were, "A war about the Scheldt, a war about a chamber-pot!"

we should have had one advantage, more than sufficient to compensate all these disadvantages : we should have been at war with the French on known principles of war : the people of France could never have been persuaded, that their existence as an independent nation, and even their lives were attacked ; and consequently they could never have been brought to make the same exertions. Does any man believe, that, for the navigation of the Scheldt, for a fortress on their frontier, or an island in the West-Indies, they would have endured the system of terror,—that they would have suffered persons and property to be put in requisition,—and that they would have been converted into what has been emphatically called, and emphatically felt, an armed nation ? Would the convention have been able to persuade them, that they were fighting for their liberties and their lives, when they were clearly told by us, that the whole contest was about the navigation of the Scheldt, and the security of the United Provinces ?—If the aid of the French emigrants and insurgents in France was thought to be an advantage superior to this, we should have taken the other part and said, *We make war, not against France, but for France : we wish neither to dismember her territory, nor to weaken her power ; but to restore to her the blessings of regular government, and to good citizens the enjoyments of their rights and property.* The inconvenience
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here would have been, that we should have united against us every republican in France, with many of those who, although friends to a limited monarchy, dreaded the re-establishment of the ancient system. But we should have produced this good effect, that all the emigrants, all Frenchmen attached to the old system, and all who disliked the system of terror more than they disliked monarchy, would have exerted themselves in our favour. Through a childish hope of gaining the advantages of both plans, ministers have gained the advantages of neither. How could it be otherwise? When Condé and Valenciennes surrendered, they were taken possession of in the name of the emperor. The garrison of Mentz was sent to fight against the royalists of La Vendée. When we took the French islands in the West Indies, did we take possession of them for Lewis XVII.? We took possession of them for ourselves to be retained as conquests, if the chance of war should leave them in our hands. When such was our conduct, could it be imagined that any French emigrant, whose situation was not desperate, would join us; or that all who loved their country more than they loved royalty would not be against us? In all cases to attend to justice is particularly important; and the love of country is a motive so powerful as to be used as a pretext even by those who feel it not. The royalists held out long and bravely; but what
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could they say to the people of France--what could they put in their manifestos of equal weight with the addresses from the Convention? They might say, *If we conquer, the French monarchy will be restored, but curtailed and dismembered; and the first steps towards peace will be the surrender of one third of its former territory.* The Convention could say, *If we conquer, France will remain entire, a great and independent nation, triumphant over all the powers who have leagued against her liberties.* With such discouragements on the one hand, and such flattering prospects on the other, was it to be expected that any considerable number of Frenchmen would connect their own cause with that of the allies? We have so shuffled and trimmed in our professions, that no party will flock to our standard. It will be said, that we could not be certain, in the first instance, how far it would be expedient to interfere in the internal affairs of France;—that we must watch events, and act accordingly. By this indecision,—by this want of clearness with respect to our ultimate intentions, we have lost more than any contingency could ever promise. Toulon was taken possession of by Lord Hood, on condition, as those who surrendered it understood, of restoring the constitution of 1789. Whether ministers intended to observe that condition, I know not: but in their subsequent publications they gave reason to hope that they did. They offered peace
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and protection to all well-disposed Frenchmen who should join in restoring monarchy, without specifying what kind of monarchy ; and what protection have they given to those who endeavoured to restore it ? Have not the royalists, for want of assistance or encouragement, been obliged, however reluctantly, to submit to the laws of the republic ? If the allies were fighting either *for* France, or *against* France, what should have been their conduct towards FAYETTE and DUMOURIER ? The treatment of Fayette by the Austrians will damn their name to eternal infamy. They found him, and the companions of his misfortune, not at the head of an army, nor in arms, and took them, against all the laws of nations and of war, not as prisoners of war, but as prisoners to be consigned to a dungeon. If the allies were fighting *against* France, surely they ought not to treat as criminals generals quitting the enemy. DUMOURIER came over, when he thought he had some power with his army, less, indeed, than he supposed, although it was impossible that a man, who had served his country with such ability and success, should not have had a considerable party in it. How was he treated ? After extolling his virtue, at a moment when he had rendered his virtue doubtful, when it was found that he could not bring his army with him, the allies acted as if they had passed a decree forbidding any French general to come over to them

them in future. It has been said, that no religious sect is so bigoted as to exclude converts; but the political bigotry of the allies is more austere than religious bigotry. If they were fighting *for* France against the Convention, they ought to have praised DUMOURIER as a convert, and held him up as an example for the conversion of others. If they were fighting *against* France, they should have considered all Frenchmen as enemies in the common acceptation of the term; and not by denouncing vengeance for crimes committed in France, as lord Auckland had done in a paper published at the Hague, given ground for that enthusiasm of resistance, which arose in the minds of men who conceived their lives, as well as liberties, to be in danger;—an enthusiasm, which has united men for common defence, who, in every moment of respite, were tearing one another to pieces, and sending their opponents to the scaffold when they had the power. If the allies were fighting *for* France, for the restoration of monarchy and regular government, I do not mean to say that those, who were immediately the cause of the murder of the king, should have been overlooked;—but the allies ought not to have begun with thundering forth a manifesto, threatening destruction to Paris and all its inhabitants,—a manifesto, which one cannot now bear even to read, but by contrasting the insensate fury of the menace with the im-

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tence of the attempt to put it in execution. If we were fighting *for* France, we ought to have published to the people of France, that we had no views of aggrandizement, much less of dismembering the kingdom, or taking vengeance of the inhabitants. It was well said by the excellent man, whom I have already alluded to [Mr. Burke], that *he knew not how to draw up an indictment against a whole nation*. Some exceptions might have been necessary; but these should have been mentioned by name, that other persons might have nothing to fear. By this mode of proceeding, I own that many persons, deserving of punishment, might have escaped; but this would not have been so bad as the terrifying all France by indiscriminate threats. This I conceive to be a fundamental error. The house ought to inquire whether it is so, or not; and if it is, to take a new and intelligible line of proceeding, either *for* France as a nation, or *against* it. To be convinced of the propriety of doing this, it is only necessary for every man, who hears me, to ask himself, Whether it is possible, that, if the French Convention were to refuse any thing like reasonable terms of peace, they could call forth such extraordinary exertions on the part of the people, as the idea, that there is no alternative but victory or subjugation, has enabled them to do?

XXIV. " After

XXIV. "After dwelling so long on the great errors," continued Mr. Fox, "it is almost sufficient to name the less. If we took possession of Toulon, with a view not of conquest, but of supporting the royalists in France, it was the most important advantage to which our attention could have been directed. Yet we left it with a small garrison of British troops, trusting to the aid of allies, who were either unable or unwilling to defend it. This was said to be done for the sake of an expedition against the French West India islands : and that expedition was again crippled by collecting troops under the command of the earl of Moira, for a descent upon the coast of France,—a descent, for which an opportunity has never yet been found. The consequence was, that Toulon was lost, and that a number of troops was sent to the West Indies, sufficient to *take* the islands, but not to *keep* them. Guadaloupe is already gone :—there is little hope of retaining any part of St. Domingo ;—and even Martinico and St. Lucia cannot be considered as in a state of security. The error of the last campaign has been confidence in the king of Prussia, in the Belgians, and the Dutch. We told the people of the Austrian Netherlands, that they were fighting for their religion ; and the people of the United Provinces, that they were fighting for their liberties ; but neither of them believed us. We drew the Dutch into a war, which

which they had no inclination to undertake, even in defence of the Scheldt. When their protection was alledged as the principal cause for going to war, I asked, whether they had demanded our assistance? To this it was answered, that they durst not demand it; but if it was offered to them, they would not refuse it. I then believed and stated the case to be the reverse;—that if our assistance, which they did not wish for, was offered, they durst not refuse it. All that has happened since, confirms my opinion. While we were fighting in the Austrian Netherlands, the Dutch gave us but a feeble aid. When we were driven out of the Austrian Netherlands, and the United Provinces were to be defended, the Dutch joined in welcoming the French;—a clear proof that they were forced into what we called a defensive war. We ought to have known beforehand, that the people of the United Provinces did not wish to be defended by us, and therefore were not to be depended upon as allies. We ought to have taken one of two lines of conduct;—to have either withdrawn our mischievous and oppressive protection, and said, *defend yourselves*; or to have taken possession of the country with an army, and defended it like a conquered province.”

XXV. Having placed this unparalleled series of political and military blunders in so strong a light as must have flashed conviction on the darkest and dullest

dullest understanding, Mr. Fox took a view of the naval part of the campaign, and contended that the captures by the enemy were greater than in any former war, and that our trade was not greater in the same proportion. "By documents," said he, "which I conceive to be tolerably correct, it appears that in the second year after France took part in the American war, the number of captures was 499. Of these perhaps one half were taken by the Americans. In the second year of this war, when we have France alone to contend with, the number of captures is 860. Until I hear this extraordinary difference, under circumstances so much less unfavourable, accounted for, I must either suppose a defect in the force and number of our navy, or mismanagement in the direction of it. His majesty's speech from the throne in 1794 held out many topics of past success as arguments for future hope. *We had driven the French out of Holland:—we had recovered the Austrian Netherlands:—we had taken several strong fortresses on the frontiers of France, which would facilitate our further progress:—and, while we had annoyed the enemy's contracted trade, our own had been effectually protected.* Yet, in the course of that very year, 860 of our ships were taken! Every article of consolation held out in that speech is gone. We have lost the fortresses on the French frontier:—we have lost the Austrian Netherlands:—

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we have lost Holland:—our trade has suffered more than in any former war within the same period:—and the recaptures bear no greater proportion to the ships taken than in former times. Are, or are not, these grounds of inquiry for the house of commons? In what light do gentlemen consider themselves? Have they been sent here only to vote taxes, as has been too often the case with the parliaments of former kings, or to act as a national council, and to see that the executive government is not only incorrupt, but judicious? It might have been supposed, that, after the memorable first of June, we should be masters of the sea; but of this we have no reason to boast. Our fleet came into port in November; and the French fleet put to sea, no doubt, because they knew that ours was returned. So little foresight had been shewn in preparing our fleet for sea again, that it could not go out till late in January; and for two months the French were thus masters of the sea. It will be said, that our fleet cannot be always out. To this I must answer, that, under proper management, a great part of it always may. But will any man contend that it could not have been ready for sea in less than two months, during great part of which time it was known that the French fleet was out? It was even reported, that, after the ships were ready, they were detained for want of biscuit, which it became necessary to send to them by land

land carriage. How true these reports may be, I know not; but all the circumstances are such as to demand inquiry, unless gentlemen are prepared to say, either that ministers have steered us so steadily, and piloted us so surely, as to deserve implicit confidence; or that we are in a situation so prosperous, as to be of itself a sufficient proof of their good conduct. Is our present situation such, I will ask the minister himself, as to afford any rational ground for confidence? I am not, I hope, a man to give to success more credit than is due to it: I can reverence unsuccessful wisdom: my own life has not been such as leads me to think that success should be considered as the criterion of skill. Let the minister say, that *the hand of God was upon us, when human prudence could avail us nothing*; but let him not say, that *Great Britain has been declining in every quarter,—that all her exertions, and the most lavish profusion of treasure and of blood, have availed her nothing*; and yet deny the propriety of an inquiry by the house of commons, to discover, if possible, the source of so melancholy a reverse of fortune. In such a case, it is the duty of every member of this house, of the friends of ministers themselves, to give up their private confidence, and promote inquiry. Then, if they find, that ministers have been pursuing an impracticable object, or endeavouring to obtain it by inadequate means, they will know how to apply the remedy.

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If they find that ministers have been conducting the affairs of the state with ability and wisdom, they will be able to say, with satisfaction to themselves and their constituents, *We will continue our confidence in these ministers.*"

XXVI. What little claim they had to such confidence was farther illustrated by Mr. Fox in a single glance at the situation of Ireland. "Fatigued," said he, "as I feel myself, and long as I have trespassed on the patience of the house, I purposely omit many incidental points, trusting to the force of the general argument. There is, however, one so closely connected with the prosecution of the war, that I cannot pass it over,—I mean the irritated state of the sister kingdom. When the war first became the subject of discussion, I know I was blamed by many of my friends, both in this house and out of it, for repeatedly, though ineffectually pressing upon the house a variety of considerations: I harassed the house with questions which they were unwilling to debate:—not, as was said by an author, [Cardanus] now very little read, *Nunquam libentius loquor quam cum quod loquor auditoribus displice*:—I felt no pleasure in addressing myself to unwilling hearers:—but I persevered, because I felt it my duty to do so; and I stated many circumstances that ought to discourage from going to war; among others, that the Austrian Netherlands could not be retained while the emperor's

emperor's government was hated ;—that Holland could not be defended while the Dutch did not wish to defend it ;—and that the king of Prussia, by his conduct in his very first campaign against France, had proved that he was not to be depended upon. I was then told, that my speech was a libel upon all our actual and all our possible allies. If it was a libel, experience has proved that it had in it what has been held the strongest ingredient of libel, TRUTH ; and I hope that speech will go down to posterity as a *convicted libel*. On the same occasion I adverted to Ireland, and was told, *touch not upon Ireland*. I answered then, as I should do now, that I must touch upon every thing that demanded the attention of the house in a discussion so important as peace or war. Ireland is an important part of his majesty's dominions, in regard to the supplies of men it affords for the army and navy in time of war. It is important in another point of view ;—from the identity of constitution, and its being under the same executive government. We may look to it for information with regard to the disposition of ministers, and for examples to imitate or shun. Formerly I saw great difficulty in giving to the catholics of Ireland all that they had a right to claim as subjects of the same constitution, namely, equality of civil rights with every other subject. A strange jargon of protestant ascendancy had been set up, as if upon

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that depended the constitution of Ireland. Ministers some time since got over the difficulty in part; and, although not in a way calculated to obtain much respect, united the affections of the catholics for the time*. When the new cabinet coalition took place in July, (a coalition which I sincerely lament,) I hoped that this good at least would arise from it, that the corrupt administration of Ireland would be reformed,—that effectual remedies would be applied to inveterate abuses,—and that as much would be gained to liberty there, as seemed to be lost to it here. It was upon the point of being gained, when, unhappily, things took a different turn, I defy the most stubborn advocate to deny, that the present irritated state of Ireland is owing solely to ministers,—no matter whether here or there,—no matter whether to the right honourable gentleman, [Mr. Pitt] the duke of Portland, or earl Fitzwilliam; though I myself have no doubt as to which of them it is owing. A lord lieutenant was sent over, popular from his personal character, and more so, as connected with a part of the ministry here supposed to be favorable to the wishes and claims of Ireland. He arrived: he received into his confidence men to whom the people had long looked: he opened his plan: he was idolized, and to such a degree

* This will be more fully explained in the subsequent account of the affairs of Ireland.

as to make the people join with him in the cry of war. He called upon them for support, and promised the emancipation of the catholics"—[Mr. Pitt intimated across the table, that it was *not* so. Mr. Fox, with a scowl of virtuous indignation, and the emphatical tone of truth, proceeded thus—] "He *did* promise the complete emancipation of the catholics in Ireland: in whatever manner it was understood, or misunderstood in the British cabinet, such was the fact in Ireland. The people saw his measures: they saw the men whom he selected to conduct them; and although he dismissed not quite so many as they could have wished of those whom they had long regarded with detestation, they were satisfied. He called for supplies, in confidence of the promised reform of abuses: as it was the character of the nation to be more generous than prudent, large supplies were granted beforehand. Having given all, the cup was dashed from their lips: their eager and excited hopes were blasted; and even the favorite friend of ministers was recalled, whose character was worth that of the whole cabinet,—whose character had given popularity to the whole ministry, because it obtained it the credit of being pure,—and whom to gain they had thought a greater prize than all their new allies. I shall probably be told, that earl Fitzwilliam went beyond his instructions, and suffered measures to be brought

forward for which he had no authority. To this I answer, that I do not believe it. But of what moment is it, whether ministers here or earl Fitzwilliam were to blame? The danger from the irritation of Ireland is the same; and if the house should now refuse to inquire into the circumstances, they may make themselves responsible for the dismemberment of that kingdom. I entertain a great partiality for earl Fitzwilliam. Whenever the matter shall be investigated, I am persuaded that the noble earl's conduct in the business will be found to have been such as that of all his life has been. But this, though a source of much private satisfaction, is no reason why the house should not go into the inquiry. The catholics are three fourths of the population of Ireland—But the catholics are no longer a party—The only parties in Ireland are the possessors of a few places against the Irish nation. As far as I have heard, the protestants and the catholics are entirely united. Since the year 1793, they have had only one common interest against the abuses and corruption of government. I do not apprehend any separation of catholics from protestants:—what I apprehend is the alienation of the whole Irish nation from the English government. Many people think, that, because the constitution of Ireland consists of king, lords, and commons, each of these three branches is exactly like the branch of the same name in
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this country : but they differ in many important respects. Many people may think, that, since the year 1793, the catholics have suffered no persecutions or exclusions ; those who think so, are much misinformed. But, putting all this aside, does not what has lately passed afford strong ground for discontent, and call upon this house to inquire, and even, if necessary, to punish? If ministers here are to blame, let them be punished : or, if earl Fitzwilliam in Ireland has been madly running after popularity, by offering what he had not powers to grant, let him be punished. But if, on the other hand, it shall appear, that the noble earl has been trifled with, and shuffled out of his measures and his situation, what punishment is due to those who have been the authors or instruments of this double dealing? Let the house therefore inquire ; for, upon the existence of danger there can be no difference of opinion, whatever difference there may be with respect to its magnitude."

XXVII. Having established every point by the plainest as well as the most forcible reasoning, Mr. Fox anticipated the answer usually made to such motions as his, namely, that the ultimate object of inquiry being the removal of ministers, *why not at once move for their removal?* His reason for not doing so was, because in such a state as that to which they had brought the nation, inquiry into their conduct ought to precede a motion for their removal;

removal; although he would not affect to disguise, that, if the inquiry were gone into, a motion for their removal must follow. He then made a few remarks on the folly, weakness, and indecision of ministry. They had never declared whether they were making war *for* France, or *upon* France. Just so had been their conduct towards Ireland. They had never spoken distinctly to either. There were cases in which one would imagine a minister must think it for his interest to be clearly understood: but men never got the better of their nature—It was not from any want of words or choice of expression, that the right honourable gentleman [Mr. Pitt] could not speak intelligibly; he was misunderstood by the house; and by his own particular friends: he employed the gift of words, not like other men, for the sake of being more distinct,—but for the purpose of being misunderstood; even his new associates in the cabinet did not understand him: of him it might be said as of a great man of ancient times, *in rebus politicis, nihil simplex, nihil apertum, nihil sincerum*. Mr. Fox turning from these strictures to the main object of his speech, brought the whole to the following very plain, but forcible and impressive close: “Should the house agree to go into the inquiry, they will prove that they are really affected by the interest of their constituents: if they resolve to go on, without knowing who are our allies,

allies, or whether we have any, there will be too much reason for saying that our constitution is gone. In either case I shall derive, from having made the motion, the satisfaction of shewing that there are men in the house, who believe the situation of the country to be such as it really is, and who would do every thing in their power to avert the consequences but too much to be apprehended."—He concluded with stating his motion in the usual manner.

XXVIII. The inferiority of genius, and the total want of candour, of conscious rectitude and dignity, were never more conspicuous than in Mr. Pitt's reply. Unequal to the contest of manly argument, and shrinking from the investigation of past delinquency, he represented the whole of what had been brought forward by Mr. Fox as done solely with a view to the difficulty and embarrassment of the affairs of Ireland; though the patriot orator had only made a slight allusion to them towards the close of his speech, considering them merely as a collateral subject which he could not pass over. But the minister, willing to take it for granted that all the other topics were pre-judged by former votes and decisions of the house, said he would briefly call their attention to the only true point of the motion which had just been made, namely the situation of the sister kingdom. He did not mean to deny that there was just cause to
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lament some occurrences which had taken place ; but he could positively assert, that, if this affair should be fully investigated, it would appear to the house and to the kingdom, that none of the embarrassments, which might happen in that country, could in any degree be attributed to his majesty's servants here. What inference would any man of unperverted understanding have drawn from this assertion, but that the ministry must be eager to put the matter to the proof? Mr. Pitt gave it a very different turn, and eluded this inference by one of his usual subterfuges. If it was true, he said, that Ireland was in a state of uneasiness and ferment, it was the strongest reason possible why the present moment should not be chosen for the proposed inquiry. On this single point, glaringly inconsistent as it was, he spun for above an hour a flimsy web of sophistry, and decorated its edges with the tinsel of artificial rhetoric. Then, as if he had refuted the grand argument for going into a committee on the state of the nation, he affected to follow Mr. Fox very cursorily through the other parts of his speech. He had no complaint to make of the general nature of the subjects selected by the right honourable gentleman as fit subjects for inquiry ; *though, without meaning to say any thing PERSONALLY UNCIVIL to him, he could not for a moment suppose him SERIOUS in any of the arguments he had made use of.* What an infidious

fidious mode of attack ! “ Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike ! ” Mr. Pitt was very sensible of the *serious impression* which those arguments were likely to make on the mind of every honest man in the kingdom : he knew that they had even staggered for a moment the trained bands of the treasury bench ; and that Mr. Fox had left the house no alternative, but an evident dereliction of its duty, or a ready concurrence in his motion. The minister’s only resource, therefore, was in wilful misrepresentation. He found it much easier to question the seriousness of those arguments, than to refute them ; and he appealed to gentlemen, that is to say, to his own majority, whether, at a period so arduous and important as the present, when the country was stated to be in every point of view in such imminent danger, they could think it expedient or wise to commence an investigation of so extensive a nature, and more especially at so advanced a period of the session, when there was no probability of making any considerable progress in it ? Besides, former debates on the various subjects now proposed had, in his opinion, rendered the appointment of a committee as unnecessary as in another point of view he had deemed it improper. They were called upon to examine into the pecuniary resources of the country. That point was already ascertained by the vote of the house for a loan of eighteen millions, and by the

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probable efficiency of taxes to a large amount !—With respect to the decrease of population, he admitted that in the course of a war so novel in its nature, and so unexampled in its consequences as the present, we must lose a considerable number of men ; yet the sacrifice, great as it was, was necessary for the good of the whole, and the loss was swallowed up in the magnitude of the object we were engaged for. The great augmentation of the army and navy must certainly affect population ; yet so far from manufactures having decreased, the exports in the last year had been greater than in any former year of war.—The increased price of insurance arose from the unexampled extent of our commerce, and the almost total annihilation of that of France, which led her attention to the equipment of privateers. In addition to this, as the enemy had hardly in any one instance contended for the empire of the sea, small divisions of their fleet were better enabled to harass our commerce.—Had any inquiry on the subject of our own resources been necessary, it ought to have preceded the consideration of ways and means.—The arguments respecting other nations appeared to Mr. Pitt equally strange and unfounded. The failure on the part of the king of Prussia was no reason why this country ought never again to enter into a treaty of a similar nature ; and if the emperor's

peror's exertions were checked by the pecuniary inability imputed to him, the natural conclusion to be drawn from the former opinions of the house on the subject of the war was, that Great Britain, possessing resources of money, should by means of these resources enable the emperor to bring his troops into the field.—It was unfortunately too true, that the success of our allies had not corresponded with our hopes; but though the effect of their assistance was not displayed in victories and conquests, yet they had divided a force, which, if concentrated, might have been infinitely more destructive.—The king of Sardinia had not the option of neutrality, as the French had declared war against him.—An inquiry into the conduct of the executive government of this country towards neutral powers could answer no possible good end at the present moment: whenever the *proper* time for such inquiry should come, it would be found conformable to the laws of nations, and governed in every instance by the principles of justice and moderation; but ministers at home were not chargeable with every particular expression made use of by his majesty's servants abroad.—As to that often disputed point, the object of the war, administration had thought it consonant to good sense and policy not to preclude themselves by specific declarations from taking advantage of any fortuitous circumstance which might

happen during its continuance.—The charges also which were brought against them of a want of vigilance and activity in conducting it, had been so repeatedly answered before, that nothing new could now be urged on the subject. It was, indeed, natural for the right honourable gentleman, who made the motion, to forget all our advantages, while he remembered and often exaggerated our misfortunes—it was natural for him to lessen the value of our conquests, and to depreciate the splendor of our victories:—but the question for the consideration of the house was, Whether or not they were to retract all the opinions which they had so often and so solemnly pronounced; and whether they would employ concession and submission as the most likely means to obtain an honourable, a secure, and a lasting peace? Those gentlemen who looked to such a peace from a vigorous prosecution of the war, and those who did not impute a temporary interruption of success to want of judgment or to guilt, would not, Mr. Pitt was sure, withdraw their confidence from his majesty's ministers, without proof of their want of capacity: if they did, it would not be to make room for those who, instead of encountering difficulties, were disposed to shrink from them; but for persons who would not make the disgrace of the nation the first step to a peace.

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He concluded by moving that the house should adjourn.

XXIX. As soon as Mr. Pitt sat down, Mr. Sheridan rose, not, he said, from an idea that any exertions of his could give the least additional force to the arguments which his right honourable friend had urged with so much ability and eloquence; but in order to make some remarks on what had just fallen from the chancellor of the exchequer. He felt the utmost confidence in asserting, that the arguments of Mr. Fox had, in no one instance, been answered by the right honourable gentleman, though possessed of talents which seldom left him without resources upon such occasions. Mr. Sheridan therefore had this farther reason for being satisfied with the impressions which his honourable friend's animated and brilliant speech had made on his mind: he was fully persuaded, *that it was unanswerable*. By way of proof, he need only refer to the very reply made by Mr. Pitt, who, with great ingenuity and art, had passed by and neglected all the arguments which carried with them the most irresistible conviction, and had totally mistated and misrepresented the few he had thought proper to notice. The question which had been put to the house for their investigation was, *Whether or no so great a portion of calamity had been suffered by the country during the progress of this unhappy war, as to*
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show that blame must be attached somewhere; and whether it was not becoming the dignity and character of the house to inquire where that blame lay? Mr. Pitt, however, had stated, that the motion was brought forward for the purpose of reversing the determinations of the house; and that it was too late, because the effect of it would be to make the house retract the whole of the declarations they had made from the beginning of the session. This was a gross misrepresentation; for the question of war and peace had been carefully kept out of sight during the whole of the speech of his honourable friend. The house, indeed, had been called upon to inquire, whether they chose to pursue the same object by the same means; and whether they would leave the execution of their designs in the same hands, in which they had so long been vested? According to Mr. Pitt's mode of reasoning, no calamities which might befall the country, no neglect or misconduct of ministers, however productive of the most pernicious consequences, would justify a call upon the house to inquire into the actual state of the nation, or to investigate the causes of such calamities, and the effects of such misconduct. That right honourable gentleman had, indeed, allowed, at the conclusion of his speech, that the misconduct of ministers was a proper object of inquiry, and that, if it should be proved, a motion ought to be made for

for their removal, insinuating, at the same time, that successors should not be appointed who would disgrace the country. Mr. Sheridan did not believe it a difficult matter to find men, even in the lines of opposition, who would not disgrace the country so much as its present ministers. Another invidious insinuation had been thrown out by the chancellor of the exchequer, in pronouncing an eulogium on the conduct of the army and navy, as if Mr. Fox, by omitting to state their services, had forgotten their merit. The house, however, Mr. Sheridan observed, were too well acquainted with the candour of his right honourable friend, to allow that he had, upon any occasion, taken away from their merit, or lost an opportunity of paying that tribute of just applause, which the services and bravery of our army and navy had so repeatedly merited from every friend to the country.—Mr. Pitt had also contended that the discussion ought to have been brought forward previous to the vote of supply; but, if this had been done, would not the right honourable gentleman have said, that it could only proceed from a factious and turbulent spirit to agitate a question of such a nature while the enemy was at the door, and the house had not granted the aids that alone could enable the country to resist the dangers which threatened them? And now, when ministers had brought the country into a situation
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of the utmost peril, they told the house, that having agreed to provide for the necessities which their misconduct had brought on, it was pledged to support them with unlimited confidence, and without being informed how those necessities had been produced! Did all inquiry cease when the supplies were voted? Did they operate as a temporary act of indemnity, and screen the minister from all the sins of the session? In that case, Mr. Sheridan thought that the house had better suspend its parliamentary functions, and vote a dictator at once, till the war was over, than continue them with such a disgraceful acquiescence.—Having fully illustrated this leading point, he entered into a minute exposition of the other fallacies, misstatements, and unfair conclusions in Mr. Pitt's speech.—The drains from our population were evident from a review of the present state of the recruiting service, where we saw regiments filled up with decrepid old men and boys.—The increase of exports was temporary and unnatural, arising from the number of captures of our outward bound trade, which were to be supplied by fresh cargoes.—As to the revenue of the country, and the efficiency of taxes, were one to be imposed on *places* and *pensions*, according to the example of an allied kingdom, [Spain] it would be more productive than all the late expedients put together.—Experience had sufficiently demon-

strated

frated the folly of relying on the cordiality of our allies: the king of Prussia's breach of faith was not the only instance: the same thing might be said of the empress of Russia, who had never yet fulfilled one of the stipulations to which she was pledged.—The chancellor of the exchequer had treated in a very loose manner the remarks made by Mr. Fox on the language of our ambassadors at foreign courts; and had highly extolled the moderation of the British cabinet towards neutral nations. The uniform tenor and spirit of that language, in all the instances which had been mentioned, shewed that those ambassadors acted in strict conformity to their instructions; and in what did the boasted moderation of the cabinet consist? It had been carried to the extremes of cringing and of mean submission towards Denmark, Sweden, and America, powers whom we dared not offend, while we bullied the petty states of Italy with the most outrageous insolence. We had called on them in a menacing tone to abandon their neutrality. Yet it had been expressly stated, in a speech from the throne, as a matter of praise, that this country had so long remained neuter, at the early periods of the contest with France. On what principle then of the law of nations could it become a crime in other states to preserve that very neutrality, which had been the boast of the country said to be forced into the war?

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Mr.

Mr. Pitt had adopted another mode of shifting with respect to the affairs of Ireland: he had dwelt so long on the topic, that any person, who had not heard Mr. Fox, would have supposed that an inquiry into the state of that country had been the sole object of the motion. Unfortunately, however, for the chancellor of the exchequer, it was in the recollection of every gentleman in the house, that full three hours of Mr. Fox's speech had elapsed previously to his saying any thing on that part of the subject. It must also be remembered that notice had been given of the present motion long before any account was received of the embroiled state of the sister kingdom. The whole, therefore, of Mr. Pitt's remarks on that head fell to the ground. The subject was certainly very proper as a collateral foundation for inquiry into the ruinous system pursued by ministers; for when only this one circumstance remained in their climax of folly, that they should contrive to place the Irish in such a situation as to hazard, through their irritation, a separation of the empire, it was a great aggravation of the rest of their misconduct.—Mr. Sheridan did not forget, in the wide range of his observations, to point out the bad effects of the temporizing policy which had been pursued with regard to France in concealing the precise object of the war,—a policy, by which the return to royalty, had the nation been so disposed, was rendered impossible; and to which the
great

great disunion among the allies might in some measure be ascribed.—He pressed ministers very much to declare their views with respect to the sort of government they wished to see established in France. Could they not find time, amidst their jobbing arrangements of places which so much disgraced them, to agree upon that point, *Whether they still speculated upon the destruction of republicanism, and the restoration of monarchy?* If they indulged any lingering wish of this kind, he was certain it was directly against the welfare of their country. For his part, he could see nothing in the continuance of the horrid struggle but the introduction of ferocious anarchy on the one hand, or of a vindictive despotism on the other.—He had no alarm about the present republic. If their principles were so bad as represented, why not leave them to their own destruction, and desist from war? It was plain, that the acknowledgment of the republic must precede all negotiation; and it was only the pride and obstinacy of ministers that prevented them from retracting errors which they must do at last. Considering peace then as the ultimate object, and that agreeing to the present motion would be advancing one step towards it, he should for that reason, as well as for those already explained, vote with his right honourable friend.

XXX. " As in a theatre, the eyes of men,
 " After a well-grac'd actor leaves the stage,
 " Are idly bent on him that enters next,
 " Thinking his prattle to be tedious :"

even so must the house of commons have been affected on seeing Mr. Canning rise after such a speaker as Mr. Sheridan. Nothing surely but the strangest infatuation of self-conceit, or an unrestrainable eagerness to shew his claims to the *wages of office*, could have prompted the newly made under secretary to enter upon a subject which had been completely exhausted by those who went before him. His attempts at argument were only faint echos of Mr. Pitt's sophistry, set off with a little puerile quaintness. " The motion would have come with more propriety, before the house had consented to vote the supplies for the public emergencies.—The house had already come to a solemn decision on every subject which had any relation to the war.—The agitation of the affairs of Ireland, at the present conjuncture, was calculated to revive ancient prejudices and antipathies between the subjects of this and the sister kingdom." —But this aspiring orator's remarks on the causes of popular discontent, and his defence of the pension-list, will place in a clearer light the acuteness of his reasoning, and the classical purity of his style, as well as his dignity of sentiment, and disinterested patriotic ardor. Having asserted, *that the war*
had

had originally the sanction of the people, and that they still went hand in hand with the minister, several members exclaimed *no, no*; “then,” said he, “they ought, in as much as the object of it is not accomplished: but the failure of expeditions, and the disasters incident to war, usually produce discontent in the country: this proceeds from the *mass of the people* not being competent to *dive into the arcana* of the executive government.”—What exquisite felicity of expression! Mr. Canning was struck, no doubt, with the famous decree of the French convention for rallying all the people round the national standard,—a decree that operated, as it were with electrical force, melting down five and twenty millions of individuals into one general *mass of valour*, which was not to be crushed by any effort of external violence. The young rhetorician improved upon the idea, and, by an admirable change of metaphor, converted the people into *a mass of divers*, and the *arcana* of government into an abyss of which those *divers* could never find the bottom!!! His defence of the pension-list afforded a still more striking specimen of the sublime and beautiful. “He was aware,” he said, “that there was always a degree of ridicule attached to the *wages of office*: but, in *his opinion*, the practice was such a *stimulus* to the performance of *glorious actions*, that it was the *life-blood of the constitution*.” How mistaken were all the most celebrated Greek and Roman

Roman writers in their notions of the noblest and most powerful incentive to great and good deeds, *the love of one's country!* Such a silly doctrine may have been calculated for the meridians of liberty and virtue: but, in St. Stephen's chapel, an under secretary of state proclaims to his countrymen, *that TRUE GLORY consists in being placed on the PENSION-LIST!* This is the *spur that stimulated* so many heroes of pensioned fame—nay more—this *stimulus*, on repeating three or four magical words, becomes the *life-blood of the constitution!* All former flatterers of royalty could never in their highest flights of fancy soar beyond the assertion, that the throne is the *fountain of honour*, or that it is the *trunk of the British constitution*, capable of preserving undiminished its essential vigour, even in case its great branches, the two houses of parliament, were to be *lopped off*. But how weak do these images appear, when compared with Mr. Canning's figurative boldness! Even the discovery of the circulation of the blood in the human body cannot excite half so much surprise as the grand theory of this political anatomist. Let the admirers of the British constitution now learn from him *that the WAGES OF OFFICE are the LIFE-BLOOD of that constitution,—the true source not only of its strength and beauty, but even of its EXISTENCE!!!*

XXXI. Mr. Bastard wished the successes of the French and our own commercial losses to be inquired

quired into; but he was averse to any discussion relative to the affairs of Ireland. Mr. M. Robinson and Mr. H. Major opposed the motion nearly on the same ground; and Mr. Wilberforce said, that, much as he admired the manly eloquence of the right honourable gentleman who had moved for the committee, yet, at the end of his speech, he felt himself inclined to vote against it, because he thought the inquiry highly impolitic, and likely to prove injurious, particularly with respect to Ireland, in the ticklish situation that country now stood in.

XXXII. It could not be a task of any very great trouble to Mr. Foy to expose the unfairness and futility of such objections. Availing himself therefore of the privilege of reply, which is always granted to the author of a motion, he closed the debate with a short speech nearly to the following purport :

“ I feel it necessary to say a few words in answer to what I have heard to-night, and chiefly to what has been urged by the right honourable gentleman who moved the question of adjournment. Gentlemen have partly misunderstood my meaning if they consider that I have wished for a committee to inquire into the state of the nation on any one particular point; or that I wish particularly to agitate topics of war or peace, which have been already discussed in this house, and in which
I have

I have not had the good fortune to agree with the majority. I meant, by moving for the committee to inquire into the conduct of the war in general, in order that we might see how his majesty's ministers have acted. Gentlemen on the other side say, they do not wish to turn out ministers. They say too, that they do not wish to inquire into the conduct of the war. That is natural enough:—the meaning of it is obvious. They do not wish for an inquiry;—that is, they know that an inquiry is likely to influence the opinion of this house upon the conduct of ministers; and that, after having been compelled to censure them, we shall, in justice to our own consistency, vote for an address to the throne for their removal. I said that this country was in a situation, which, on the face of things, called for an inquiry, and therefore I moved for it; and I believe that the result would be, that this house could not, consistently with its own honour, refuse a vote of censure on ministers, and an address for their removal; and therefore it is not mysterious that some gentlemen should be unwilling to go into an inquiry. But are we, indeed, to go *hand in hand* with the ministers, and are not to inquire into their conduct, lest the result should be, that they must be removed? Are we, indeed, so very complaisant to administration, that rather than they should lose the power, the country shall be lost. The right honourable

honourable gentleman [Mr. Pitt] has insinuated something like a hint, that if he and his associates were to be dismissed to-morrow, and others more able were to be appointed in their stead, neither his majesty nor the public would look to those who support the present motion for their assistance. Now, Sir, upon that subject, I have no objection to say what I feel, and what, indeed, I partly expressed on a former occasion—*If this war be to be carried on with more vigour than it has been on our part, and by men of greater capacity than the present ministers, but on the same principles as it has been hitherto avowed, and for the same object—and I know that there are many men who are friends enough to this war, to carry it on upon such terms—all I can say is, that there is not any thing his majesty can offer to me—no, Sir, nor any thing that any prince in Europe can offer to me, which should induce me to take any share in it.—But is that, or can it be, a reason that this house should not inquire into the conduct of ministers, who have brought upon this country such calamities?—calamities, that have never been equalled in any period of its history! Even those who were originally, and who are still against any terms of negociation for peace, should vote for an inquiry into the conduct of the war, and be ready to follow it up, if necessary, with an address to his majesty to appoint some persons more likely to conduct it with success.*

M

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The right honourable gentleman has said, *that he is not answerable for what might be done by a minister abroad upon any particular occasion*—an expression that is unworthy of any man who calls himself a minister. The declaration of a minister abroad may create a war between two nations. Is it to be endured in this house, that the right honourable gentleman should say, *such a declaration was not mine, but was the declaration of Mr. Drake, or of any other ambassador?* The right honourable gentleman has told the house to-night, *that the ministers have acted, with regard to neutral powers, according to the spirit of the law of nations, which will appear evident, when the subject comes to be inquired into;* and yet, with the same breath, he tells the house, *he will not consent to inquire into it at all!* Then he tells us, that this is a business which ought to have been inquired into before; and much stress is laid on the time in which I have made my motion. Why, Sir, we have not been negligent, on this side of the house, in bringing forward questions upon the war. A motion was made early in the session for a negotiation for peace, which was negatived. Then came other public business, the budget, and several interesting subjects.—It is also said, that I have brought on my motion on account of the critical situation of Ireland. Now, Sir, with regard to that, I had formed a resolution of bringing this motion forward

ward before the affairs of that country wore so serious an aspect as they do now, and before I heard one word of what has lately happened there. I do not recollect the particular day,—but I am sure the fact is so; and I believe I gave notice in this house of my intention to move for a committee on the state of the nation before the late accounts from Ireland arrived. I cannot help alluding to what one honourable gentleman [Mr. Bastard] has said to-night, with regard to Ireland: he said, that he should vote for this inquiry, had I not declared my intention to move a resolution on that subject in the Committee. If so, Sir, let him vote for the inquiry into the state of the nation generally; and let him vote against the resolution with regard to Ireland, when that comes to be proposed. With respect to Ireland, I conceive that what has happened there, has arisen out of the faults of ministers in this country. A great mischief to this country has been produced by the misconduct of ministers; and I say there should be an inquiry into that business, for the particular purpose of knowing who is really to blame, in order that we may proceed to censure, and, if necessary, to punish such ministers. On the conduct of the lord lieutenant I can only say, I have a strong opinion, that when this business is fully investigated, the result will be to the honour of that nobleman, and to the shame and confusion of

the ministers in this country. That is my opinion: but what signifies what my opinion is? This house has no business with the opinions of individuals: it is its duty to inquire into the fact. But it seems there is a great delicacy upon this subject. Now, Sir, I am of opinion, there should be none; for what any minister does in his official situation is fair matter of inquiry in this house, whether it regard this country, or Ireland. I have heard it said, that we should not interfere with the parliament of Ireland, and that my motion has that tendency. I mean no such thing:—I only mean to inquire into the conduct of ministers. These things are debated in the cabinet; and perhaps some things concerning acts of parliament in Ireland are debated in the cabinet. Now, I want to know, although I would not have this house interfere in the least degree, nor have the power of interfering with the parliament of Ireland; but I want to know, I say, upon what principle it is that the cabinet should do more upon that topic than this house, or than the parliament of this country. I see no such principle: but I know, that, with regard to any recommendation from the throne to the parliament of this or of that country; that is a matter for which ministers are liable to be called to account; for it is ministers who advise that recommendation. If it were not so, let me ask, what might the consequence be!

Ministers

Ministers may so conduct themselves that the situation of the two countries may be in danger, most imminent danger; and can that happen, and yet that we shall be told that we cannot interfere? Sir, I do assert, that we have the power, and that we ought to exercise it, of calling for an inquiry; yes, Sir, of proceeding to punishment, for such malignant misconduct, on those who have been the cause of it. That such has been the conduct of ministers is undeniable and undenied. I have been told, that I am putting Ireland in danger by what I have said to-night! Pray, Sir, who has put Ireland in danger most?—I, who have moved for an inquiry into the state of it; or those who, by their mischievous conduct, have made that inquiry necessary?—I, who respect both that and this country as much as any man in this house; or those who conduct themselves as if they regarded the interests of neither, when held in competition with their own power?—Sir, I say, I have a right to call on ministers to answer for the danger, in which they have involved the two countries, and which I believe to be equally prejudicial to both.—I wish next to know, whether it is to be laid down as a fixed principle, that the general failure of the army, and the general mischief which the conduct of ministers has occasioned, are not to be considered as *prima facie* evidence of the necessity of inquiring into their misconduct? The right honourable

nourable gentleman says, that my conduct, if not counteracted, would tend to lower the dignity of this country. That a man, who has himself so lowered the dignity of this country, who has brought it to the verge of ruin by the obstinacy and the madness of his conduct, should presume even to think that any body else could lower it more than he has, is, I own, rather extraordinary. I desire to know, and I ask the minister to inform me, if he can, I ask any man in this house to inform me, when it was that I endeavoured to lower the dignity of this country? He alluded to the present war: what has been *his* conduct; and what did *I* advise this house upon that subject? I would have offered reasonable terms to France before the war commenced; and, for that purpose, I proposed a negotiation: he affected to disdain it. What has been the event? Will even he himself now attempt to say, that there is a chance of making so good a peace now, as we might have had then? Does he even hope he can ever negotiate with the French in a situation less dishonourable to us than the present? I would have negotiated with them before a fight: he must negotiate after a fight, and after a defeat too, if he negotiates at all. I would have negotiated with them while we were rich in our resources, and our commerce was entire: he must negotiate when both are desperately impaired. I would

would have negotiated before our allies were defeated, and while they were yet supposed to be in union: he must negotiate after victory has been declared in favour of the enemy, and the allies have been deserting us and one another. After this, that such a man could possibly suppose he is supporting the dignity of this country, and that he should put himself on a footing with any gentleman who has not the misfortune to be in the present administration, is an extraordinary thing; but it is an assumption of merit which is peculiar to his majesty's present council. In the mean time, *it is with heart-felt satisfaction I reflect, that, in every thing I ever proposed, I HAVE SUPPORTED THE DIGNITY OF THIS COUNTRY: I regard it as a circumstance of good fortune to me, that I NEVER GAVE AN OPINION, BY WHICH ONE DROP OF BRITISH BLOOD WAS SHED, OR ANY OF ITS TREASURE SQUANDERED.* It has been my fortune to oppose, perhaps unsuccessfully, that which brought this country into a disastrous situation, I mean the American war,—a war disastrous indeed; but, after all the calamity which it produced, we were happy then, compared with the situation of this country now: Good God! Sir, that there should be a moment, in comparison with which the American war may be deemed a period of happiness! and yet so it is: so any person will find it to be, on examining them both. The calamities of the
American

American war bear no resemblance to the present. Does the minister deny the fact? He has never yet said it; and I should be glad to hear him aver it now, for I am ready to answer him, if he does.— The right honourable gentleman has thought fit to insinuate, that those with whom I act, and myself, never mention the glory of the British arms. The fact is notoriously otherwise. There is not one instance, in which we have withheld praise from any of our gallant heroes: on the contrary, we have been proud to praise them. That right honourable gentleman was not a member of this house in the time of the American war; but if he will take the trouble of inquiring, he may be easily informed of the part I took in praising the gallantry of the British troops. America, however, was lost: we are now fearing lest we should lose Ireland: and I own to you, Sir, I tremble for the fate of Great Britain. Is it endurable, then, to hear a man accuse others of endeavouring to lower the dignity of this country, when we are doing all we can to save it, and are calling for an inquiry into the conduct of that very man, who has brought us to the very last stake, in which we are now contending for our very existence? And shall it still be a question, who is the best friend to the honour of Great Britain? This inquiry may not take place; but I am glad an honourable gentleman has intimated his intention of bringing the subject forward

forward in some other shape*. He can do it with great propriety. But I wish again to ask, if this committee be not granted, what I am to say to my constituents, if they ask, *Who are the allies of this country?—What is our relative situation with the king of Prussia?—What with the emperor?—What has been the conduct of administration with regard to the war?—What is the situation of Ireland?*—To all these questions I can only answer, *I cannot tell you any thing of these matters: the house of commons would not grant me an inquiry: they went hand in hand with the minister.* I wish the house of commons to have credit with the people. I know there are enemies to this house; and if you refuse this committee to inquire into the state of the nation, you will furnish more arguments against the house of commons, than ever were furnished by any injudicious theorist that ever wrote upon the subject.”—The majority, however, shewed but little concern for the reputation of the house: they paid far more regard to Mr. Canning’s doctrine on *the life-blood of the constitution*, and chose rather to go *hand in hand* with

* The honourable gentleman here alluded to was Mr. Wilberforce, who had endeavoured to lessen the unpopularity of his opposition to the fair inquiry now proposed, by promising to bring forward that motion for facilitating a peace, some account of which has been already given, in connection with others of a similar tendency.

the chancellor of the exchequer, and the regulator of the *pension list*, than to acquire empty *credit with the people*. The ayes for the question of adjournment were 210, the noes 63. Mr. Fox's motion was of course lost.

XXXIII. On the following Monday, March 30, the earl of Guildford drew the attention of the house of lords to the same momentous subject, dividing his discussion of it into three parts, the political, the military, and the naval, so as to embrace the whole conduct of ministers in the commencement and advancement of the war, with the perilous consequences which had flowed, and were likely to flow from their errors and their obstinacy. The leading points of argument were nearly the same as those which had been so forcibly urged by Mr. Fox in the house of commons, viz. the fatal policy of leaving the objects of the war vague and undefined;—the flagrantly disgraceful demeanour of Great Britain to neutral nations;—the insincerity and folly of our alliances;—the disastrous issue of almost every enterprise;—the sacrifice of our brave troops in useless conflicts;—the little benefit derived from the superiority of our fleets;—the captures of our merchantmen, which far exceeded those of all former wars;—the high rates of insurance, operating in many places as an embargo on trade;—in short, the decrease of our population, commerce and resources; the
 alarming

alarming posture of affairs abroad; the prevalence of discontent at home; and the danger of seeing Ireland completely lost to the British constitution. If all these did not afford decisive evidence of the misconduct of ministers, they were at least sufficient to justify suspicion and inquiry; and his lordship hoped the house would not give truth and colour to the libel contained in that perfect pattern of modern eloquence, the speech of Boissy D'Anglas, *that the English only shewed their energies in concealing their disasters.*

XXXIV. The motion for a committee was very ably supported by the marquis of Lansdowne, the earl of Lauderdale, and the dukes of Bedford, Grafton, and Norfolk; and the opposition to it was conducted precisely on Mr. Pitt's artful, disingenuous, and evasive plan. Lord Grenville and the earl of Mansfield affected to consider the state of affairs in Ireland as the only new argument in favor of an inquiry, all the other points having, they alledged, been often discussed, and as often determined by a large majority of the house. The noble secretary regretted, and thought their lordships must all regret, that such a topic had been introduced; for if any irritation or anger did really exist in Ireland, it was obvious to common sense, that public discussion could produce nothing but increased irritation, additional dangers, and

inconveniencies incalculable. The house, therefore, would acquit him of neglecting his duty, or abandoning the question, though he declined all debate on the subject *now*, pledging himself, however, to prove, *when requisite*, that whatever might happen in the sister kingdom, no part of the blame could be attributed to his majesty's ministers on this side of the water. The noble president of the council commended the secretary's discretion, and followed his example. Thus a pretended delicacy with regard to Ireland, and mendacious boasts of the successes of a war unparalleled in calamity and disgrace, were deemed sufficient reasons for rejecting all inquiry. One hundred and four members out of a hundred and eighteen, including proxies, put a flat and shameless negative on the earl of Guildford's motion.

XXXV. It was no wonder that the ministry should have betrayed a peculiar foreboding when the affairs of Ireland were touched upon, and that they should have been so averse to any inquiry into the state of that country. The discontent, inquietude, and confusion, which prevailed there, was the result of the most perfidious policy that ever disgraced a British cabinet. An attempt had been made, soon after the commencement of the war in 1793, to cajole the Roman catholics of Ireland by the concession of the elective franchise; but it was done
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with so bad a grace*, and they began to be so sensible of the cruelty and injustice of any civil exclusion, that they were not likely to remain long satisfied without a total repeal of all those restrictions to which prejudice, jealousy, and oppression had too long subjected them. The accession of the duke of Portland and of a few more of the whig party to power, or rather their coalition with a ministry whom they had so frequently reviled, though a matter of no small surprise and regret to the friends of their country in England, afforded the Irish catholics very flattering hopes of the speedy accomplishment of their wishes. They knew the Portland party to be intimately connected with those leading characters in Ireland, on whom they had the strongest reliance; and, even before the appointment of earl Fitzwilliam to the station of viceroy, they had taken measures preparatory to the expected change. Petitions, to be

* “Concessions were made,” said the catholics in their address to the duke of Leinster, “but the spirit of monopoly was retained: what was granted was given without dignity or grace: what was effected by laws was undone by madness; and the liberty of parliament was counteracted by a plenary indulgence to *Castle agents* to slander the people, or to trample them under foot. Almost at the gates of the capital a virulent persecution was permitted to establish itself, and a system of denunciation was encouraged, where a life of virtue and integrity was not allowed to weigh against the whisper of a spy, or the informations of the vilest felons.”

laid

laid before parliament, were in complete readiness, and the establishment of their claims was intrusted to the popular and eloquent Grattan. As the earl was equally well disposed to admit the justice and validity of those claims, and seemed also invested with the power of granting the catholics the most complete emancipation, we should be at a loss how to account for the sudden disappointment that took place, if the earl's letters on the subject to lord Carlisle had not furnished us with a clue to all the dark windings of this mysterious political intrigue.

XXXVI. From those letters it appears, that when the duke of Portland and his friends were to be enticed into a coalition with Mr. Pitt's administration, it was necessary to hold out such lures as would make the coalition palatable. Accordingly the home department of secretary of state, and the general management and superintendence of Ireland were offered to his grace. These offers were no sooner accepted than the scene began to open. Then, says the earl, it was first discovered that the object of all this mighty work was, not to strengthen administration by an accession of character, but to debase, degrade, and disgrace that character. When the junction was irrevocably avowed and declared, then the pretensions of Mr. Dundas to the continued management of the war were immediately brought forward; and a new office was to be cabbaged out of the duke of Portland's, and an obvious

obvious diminution of his credit and authority was proclaimed. Lord Fitzwilliam was not treated with greater delicacy. He had undertaken the government of Ireland on the express condition that he was to complete what had been left imperfect in 1793, and that the catholics were to be relieved from every remaining disqualification. He at first proposed, that the additional indulgences should be offered from the throne, being of opinion that the very best effects would be secured by such an act of unsolicited graciousness, and that the embarrassing consequences, which it was natural to foresee must result from the measures being left open for any volunteer to bring forward, would be timely and happily avoided: but to this proposal objections were stated that appeared of sufficient weight to induce the adoption of another plan. He consented, not to bring the question forward on the part of government, but rather to endeavour to keep it back until a period of more general tranquillity, when so many material objects might not press upon administration; but, as the principle was agreed on, and the necessity of its being brought into full effect was universally allowed, it was at the same time resolved, *that, if the catholics should appear determined to stir the business, and to bring it before parliament, he was to give it an handsome support on the part of government.* On his arrival in Ireland, he found that the question would

would force itself on his immediate consideration. Faithful, therefore, to the system that had been agreed upon, he lost no time in gaining the necessary information, and in transmitting the result to the British cabinet. He wrote two letters to the duke of Portland, one on the eighth, and another on the fifteenth of January, stating it as his opinion, that not to grant cheerfully on the part of government all the catholics wished for would not only be exceedingly impolitic, but perhaps dangerous;—that in doing this no time was to be lost;—and that, if he received no peremptory instructions to the contrary, he should acquiesce, to the full extent of the catholic expectation. His regular correspondence went on: he received frequent letters from the secretary of state, but none of them containing the smallest hint of disapprobation. In the mean time some dismissals took place. He removed two clerks [Hamilton and Cooke] from office, placed in situations that required a certain degree of confidence, but perfectly subordinate and of no ostensibility. He made proposals to the British minister for removing the attorney and the solicitor general, as being men on whom he could not rely in the arduous measures he meant to undertake, but for whom he was willing to secure an easy and honourable retreat. He also found it necessary to remove Mr. Beresford, commissioner

missioner of the revenue*, being a person under such universal heavy suspicions, that his lordship could not have continued him in power, without subjecting his own government to all the opprobrium and unpopularity attendant upon Mr. Beresford's administration. In consequence of having dismissed so odious a character, and on the credit of the persons whom his lordship employed, as well as through the favourable intimations given to the catholics, and the reform of old and overgrown abuses which was immediately entered upon, he obtained from the Irish parliament, which met on the twenty-second of January, aids great and munificent beyond every former example†;

* This gentleman had for twenty-seven years, uniformly voted with every administration, however hostile or odious to the people. He had even opposed the independence of his native country,—the repeal of Poyning's law,—the emancipation of an Irish parliament from the despotism of a British privy council. In return for such services, he had concentrated in his own family almost all the powers of government. His brother-in-law was chancellor; his son-in-law commissioner of treasury; he himself at the head of the revenue; and by combining with this enormous influence the farther offices of counsel to the commissioners, of store-keeper, and of banker, he had engrossed the complete management of the public money, without the possibility of any check or controul.

† These comprehended a supply of £.200,000 for seamen,—a vote for raising 43,000 men on the army and militia establishments, and a loan of £.1,700,000 for the general necessities of the empire.

and caused a spirit of union and harmony to succeed to that general discontent and dissatisfaction, as well against the system of the former government in general as against the war itself*, which, at the time of his arrival, manifestly and avowedly pervaded the bulk of the nation. Leave to bring in a bill for the relief of the catholics was moved for on the twelfth of February by Mr. Grattan, and obtained with little opposition. To have delayed it any longer might have produced great mischief and inconvenience, as there appeared a rising impatience among the catholics after the delivery of their petitions to parliament; which made lord Fitzwilliam apprehend that the measure might be transferred from the hands of Mr. Grattan to those of another, with whom his lordship might have no connection, and consequently over whom he could not expect to have any controul. At this juncture, when the hopes of the nation were raised to the utmost height,—when resolutions and addresses in favour of the catholics were adopted in every part of the kingdom,—when his lordship was going on, with the united confidence and

* A well-informed writer on this subject asserts, “ that his lordship made a war in which Ireland had no concern, save as she was implicated by Great Britain,—a war, doubtful in its cause, disgraceful in its consequences, and indefensible in its management—palatable, or at least not unpopular to the people of Ireland.”

support

support of parliament and people, in rapidly promoting internal tranquillity, and successfully providing for foreign defence,—the minister first began to cavil with him on petty arrangements, particularly the dismissal of Beresford; and, the plot gradually unravelling, the duke of Portland, in a letter of the eighth of February, touched upon the emancipation of the catholics as a matter of doubt and difficulty with the British cabinet. Then, as if the question had been started for the first moment, and had never been the subject of any former consultation, plan, or arrangement whatever, his grace cautioned the lord lieutenant against committing himself by engagements, or even by encouraging language, to give his countenance to the immediate adoption of the measure. All former opinions seemed to be forgotten: and delay, every idea of which had been relinquished in the unnoticed letter of the fifteenth of January, was now stated not merely as an expediency, or a thing earnestly wished for, but as *the means of doing a greater service to the British empire than it had been capable of receiving since the revolution, or at least since the union.* Lord Fitzwilliam, perceiving immediately the scheme that was laid against him, wrote without delay both to Mr. Pitt and the duke of Portland. In his answer to the former he stated his reasons for having determined on the dismissals, and left the minister to make his choice between

Mr. Beresford and his lordship. To the duke of Portland he testified his surprise, that so long after the impolicy and danger even of hesitating about the catholic question had been fully explained, an unseasonable wish should for the first time be expressed to have it deferred. His lordship added, that he would not be the person to run the risk of such a determination;—he would not be the person to raise a flame in the country, which nothing short of arms would be able to keep down. It was not long before lord Fitzwilliam received three letters, two of them official, and one of a private nature, from the duke of Portland, the inconsistency of which confirmed his lordship in the opinion that the duke had suffered himself to be completely duped. This was evident from what followed. The very day after the duke had written the private letter pressing lord Fitzwilliam for farther information on the question of the catholics, his grace assisted at a cabinet meeting that unanimously concurred in the recal of his lordship; and in a final letter of the twenty first of February, his grace summed up all the reasons why that measure had been deemed *necessary*, without one dissenting voice, *for the very preservation of the empire*. This letter was accompanied by one of the same date from Mr. Pitt, laying very little stress on the catholic question, except merely to declare his concurrence in the desire of the cabinet to have it delayed,

layed, but boldly accepting the alternative held out to him of chusing between Mr. Beresford and lord Fitzwilliam, and confessing that he felt himself bound to adhere to the line of conduct adopted in so many instances towards *the former supporters of government, however he might lament the consequences which must arise from the present situation.*

XXXVII. Such are the principal facts related by Lord Fitzwilliam in vindication of his conduct. He proves very clearly that the catholic bill, tho' used as a pretext by the British cabinet, entered for nothing into the cause of his recal; and that this was immediately owing to the dismissal of Mr. Beresford, though Mr. Pitt's great and primary object was to sink the reputation of the leaders of the whig party, and render them fit for no other service but to be his vile tools and instruments. The moment he thought that end accomplished, he cared not how soon he turned them adrift to all the disgrace and contempt it was his expectation and wish should attach upon their characters. In pursuance of these schemes, however, he ran the risk of dismembering the British empire. It is speaking tenderly of the sudden recal of earl Fitzwilliam to say, that *it damped the warm heart of Ireland*: it certainly was; what Mr. Grattan described it, a shock to the passions and affections of that country, coming as it did at a moment when she was calling forth all her strength to assist Great Britain, under the auspices

spices of a chief governor whom she venerated and adored, and just after her parliament had voted the largest supply which any minister had ever called for, on the faith of those measures which his excellency was known to have designed. The promised emancipation of the catholics was not the only, nor even the chief source of lord Fitzwilliam's popularity. His system appeared to embrace the redress of every grievance. During the short period of his administration, all the poorer classes of the people were relieved from the odious tax of hearth-money : the most judicious means were adopted to give them a healthy beverage, by encouraging the brewery of Ireland, which was to be no longer subject to the excise with its train of pains, penalties, and vexations ; and by additional duties on the distillery, that bane of sobriety, industry, and good order : the profligate and arbitrary police of the metropolis, which served only to tax the city and to corrupt its magistrates, without operating as a check on vice or as a preventive of crimes, was abolished : and, lastly, two resolutions were carried in parliament, relative to the necessity of a reform and retrenchment in the national expenditure. It was to shew his earnestness for such a reform, and his abhorrence of the enormous abuses which had long prevailed in the issuing of the public money, that lord Fitzwilliam had so firmly determined to dismiss Beresford and a few
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more of that party, whom a member of the Irish house of commons, by a whimsical sort of simile, compared to *tainted meat, so long hung up in the market of corruption, that if they had not been removed by lord Fitzwilliam, the lord mayor of Dublin would, in duty of his office, be bound to summon the aid of the market juries and the police, and seize and convey them to the common gaols, as joints unfit to be exposed to sale.*

XXXVIII. On the first rumour of lord Fitzwilliam's recal, Sir Lawrence Parsons, a gentleman attached to no party, but long distinguished for the independence of his principles, made a motion in the house of commons for an address to the lord lieutenant, stating that he possessed the confidence of the people and of that house, and expressing the strongest apprehensions, if he should be prematurely removed. In seconding the address, Mr. Duquerry advanced a step farther, and proposed the impeachment of Mr. Pitt, as the author of so great a national calamity. Then suddenly turning round to the known sycophants of power, "if it be asked," said he, "who speaks thus of impeachment? I answer, AN HONEST REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PEOPLE." But, after a short debate, the motion was withdrawn, at the pressing desire of some of lord Fitzwilliam's friends, who, from the noblest impulses of patriotism, were unwilling, at such a crisis, to agitate any question, or to countenance any measure which might tend to increase the
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public ferment. On the second of March, the same gentleman brought forward another motion having for its object the limitation of the money bill to the twenty fifth of May following. As this would have led to a dangerous contest between the crown and the commons, it was very properly negatived ; but a resolution, proposed by Mr. Connolly, highly approving lord Fitzwilliam's conduct, was passed, with the single dissentient voice of Mr. Beresford.

XXXIX. The cordial sympathy of the people with their *honest representatives* was fully manifested on this occasion. From one corner of the kingdom to the other a general outcry of indignation was heard against the wicked influence which had been exerted to remove a darling lord lieutenant. Never was Ireland known to speak with a voice so unanimous. Protestants and catholics, men of all religions, ranks and descriptions, were equally loud in deprecating the return to power of their *old task-masters,—of that combination which had galled the country with its tyranny,—insulted her by its manners,—exhausted her by its rapacity,—and slandered her by its malice.* The twenty fifth of March, the day of lord Fitzwilliam's departure for England, was observed as a day of national grief and affliction : the shops were shut : no business was transacted : the citizens appeared in deep mourning : a number of respectable gentlemen, dressed in black, took the
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horses from his excellency's carriage, and drew it to the water-side : even the mob displayed a noble enthusiasm by firmly opposing his lordship's wish to distribute money among them, as had been usual in the farewell processions of former vice-roys : and what was still more remarkable in such an immense multitude, they conducted themselves with the utmost order and decorum, giving way to no impulse but that of sincere respect, and betraying no emotions but those of deep-felt sorrow.

XL. A very different scene presented itself in a few days after, when earl Camden arrived, to assume the government. He was not welcomed at his landing by the sweet notes of popular acclamation ; but was received with a mockery of public joy by a band of placemen and their despicable hirelings. The march to the Castle, from the array of terror with which it was surrounded, looked more like an invasion than the conciliating approach of a new governor. Violent disturbances broke out in the evening, which could only be quelled by the interposition of the military. Other means were used to subdue the firmness of that parliament which had supported the late lord lieutenant's measures with such a shew of unanimity. Mr. Canning's doctrine, it seems, was well known in Ireland. The *life-blood of the constitution* was made to circulate ; and the Beresford party, in spite of the hisses of a betrayed and irritated nation,

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tion, once more appeared at the head of triumphant majorities in both houses. It is painful to add, that the catholic bill was soon kicked out of doors ;—that an inquiry into the state of the nation, including the reasons for earl Fitzwilliam's recal, was contemptuously refused ;—that the seeds of disunion, as well as of corruption, were scattered through the land ;—that every effort was used to revive old jealousies and prejudices between the protestants and catholics ;—and that, in consequence of such horrid policy, all the accounts from Ireland ever since have contained little more than details of outrages and proceedings in the punishment of them.

XLI. After earl Fitzwilliam's return to England, he proceeded with that temper which is the distinguishing mark of real firmness and of conscious rectitude. He did not impetuously rush to parliament with complaints of his private wrongs, or a vindication of his public conduct ; but coolly waited a favorable moment for bringing the subject before the house of lords. On the twenty fourth of April, he opened the business in a very modest yet spirited manner, with a few remarks on the importance of the office to which he had lately been appointed in a neighbouring kingdom, and on the suddenness of his recal in the middle of the most critical session of parliament that perhaps ever was known in that country. The fact conveyed
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upon the face of it a charge of great misconduct, nay of great criminality. But this was not all: it had been asserted in both houses by the ministers that, whatever might be the event in Ireland, no degree of blame could attach to his majesty's servants on this side of the water. As this certainly implied that all the blame, to whatever extent it might go, rested entirely with him; and as the ministers had, by such a declaration during his absence, endeavoured to throw off the load from their own shoulders upon his, he was happy in being now present to court the opportunity of clearing himself from every imputation laid to his charge. He trusted so far to their candour, that he would leave it to them to fix the day, which he hoped would be as early a one as possible; and he also thought the subject itself so interesting in its consequences, that it demanded from the justice and dignity of the house, as guardians of the public good, the minutest inquiry, in order to fix where the blame or criminality really lay, and who were the persons that advised his majesty to adopt such a measure as that alluded to, under the peculiar circumstances the country over which he presided was then known to be in.

XLII. It did *not* strike lord Grenville, that the mere fact of a nobleman's removal from the lord lieutenancy of Ireland conveyed in itself any certain degree of blame, either on the person so re-

called, or on those who advised the measure. Ministers had brought no charge against the noble earl: they had only endeavoured to repel it, so far as it related to them. He therefore did not see the necessity of any inquiry into the business; but if the noble earl should unfortunately persist in demanding it, he had it in his own power to bring the matter forward, and to name the day himself.

XLIII. Such a paltry and disingenuous evasion was stripped of all its fallacy by the earl of Moira. He admitted that the mere fact of recalling a lord lieutenant was not of itself an actual charge of blame; but certainly there was a great difference between this simple statement of such a fact and the particular circumstance of recal which was now the subject of consideration. The removal of a lord lieutenant at so critical a moment, in the very middle of a session in which the most arduous and important affairs that had ever engaged the attention of an Irish parliament were to come before them, was not only a singular circumstance, but carried with it an aspect very different, indeed, from that of a recal of the chief governor at a period of calm and tranquillity. The state of affairs in Ireland, which he should not then enlarge upon, made it peculiarly requisite for the prosperity of both kingdoms, that the chief governor in the neighbouring one should, at this particular instant,

stant, possess the confidence and good will of the people. From every thing he had been able to learn, the noble earl, who now challenged inquiry, did this in a very high degree; and therefore his recall had been the subject of infinite surprise and manifold conjecture to every one in both countries. That great blame must attach somewhere, he thought, could not be denied. He did not know where it lay; but no one was in doubt of it; and it would be absurd that their lordships, in their collective capacity, should be supposed to be ignorant of that, of which they were all perfectly convinced as individuals. If it lay with his majesty's ministers, it was but just and right it should be brought home to them, and that they should bear the burthen of it: if, on the contrary, it fell to the share of the noble earl, let him be answerable for the consequences: but, at all events, it was certainly necessary that an investigation should take place; and he thought his majesty's ministers ought to bring it forward.

XLIV. As neither lord Grenville nor any of the other lords in office could assign any reason why they *ought not* to bring it forward; and yet, shrinking from the inquiry, wished to throw the indelicate task on the earl himself, whose character they had endeavoured to sully by dark, unfair, and unfounded imputations, the duke of Norfolk thought it was the duty of the house to take up the subject,

ject, and to name a day for its discussion. He therefore gave notice that he would bring the matter forward on the following Thursday. But in consequence of a severe indisposition of the duke of Portland, who was deeply implicated in the business, it was deferred till the eighth of May, when the duke of Norfolk moved for an humble address to his majesty, praying that there may be laid before the house such parts of the correspondence between ministers and earl Fitzwilliam, while in Ireland, as related to the motive and the ground of his recal, immediately after parliament had voted their confidence in him, and had granted supplies with a munificence unexampled in the history of that country. In order to induce the house to assent to this motion, his grace began with some observations on the importance of the inquiry, as involving not only the honour and character of a very distinguished individual, but the probable tranquillity of the two kingdoms: he pointed out the true state of the question, which was, whether the noble earl had so far violated his duty as to make it a matter of justice or prudence to recal him; or, whether the cabinet ministers, from wantonness, caprice, or sinister motives, had improperly advised his majesty upon that subject: he took a view of the revolutions of party from the time of the American war to that of settling the late coalition, when it was clearly understood
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that the catholics of Ireland should be completely relieved from those impolitic, absurd, and unnatural restrictions, which the darkness of prejudice had at first introduced, and which the cruelty of oppression had since continued: he enlarged on the evils that were likely to result from the abuse of a nation's confidence, and thought the exertion of the inquisitorial power of parliament was the only remedy which could now be applied with any salutary effect.

XLV. The motion was seconded by lord Fitzwilliam in very persuasive language, which shewed his eagerness to clear up his reputation to his friends, and in the face of his country. It was vehemently opposed by the earls of Coventry, Mansfield, Caernarvon, and lord Sidney, who did not think that the removal of earl Fitzwilliam implied any charge against his character: it only proved such a difference between him and his majesty's ministers here, respecting Ireland, as rendered it impossible for them to act together. The sister kingdom, they added, was not in such a state of discontent as called for an inquiry; and, were it otherwise, the discussion of the business in that house could only tend to increase the evil. But they laid the greatest stress on the necessity of secrecy in the conduct of public business, and on the right of the sovereign to dismiss at pleasure any man from his services, which right they maintained
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was essential to the well-being of the state. "To inquire," said they, "in every instance into the grounds of such removals would be an interference, on the part of this house, new in point of practice, and unauthorized by the principles of the constitution."

XLVI. Not one of these points was left untouched by the earl of Guildford. He agreed with the ministry in opinion, that an inquiry was quite unnecessary to vindicate the character of the noble earl: it certainly remained pure and un sullied, not from the circumstance that no attempts had been made to fix imputations upon it, but because the efforts of a few individuals had been found insufficient to prevail against the testimony of his whole life, and the general integrity of his conduct. But a question of much greater importance than the honour and life of an individual was now at issue; and the interests of both countries were deeply involved in the decision. Was the house to be diverted from its duty by the pretended necessity of state-secrecy? Were the people of Ireland to be taught any thing which they did not at present know and feel? Were they not already in possession of the facts which would form the basis of discussion? No danger could arise from the inquiry, but from the measures which made the inquiry necessary; and could only be dreaded by the authors of such measures. The
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old argument of prerogative had also been dragged into battle, as an eternal shield of the conduct of ministers; but was it not the right, and the bounden duty of parliament to inquire into, and to watch over, that prerogative? The noble earl concluded, by severely censuring the first lord of the treasury for his constant endeavours to degrade and annihilate the whig party, observing however, that nothing else could be expected from a man who had founded his maiden fame on the desertion of those very principles with which he had set out in life.

XLVII. Lord Moira's speech on the same side of the question was justly admired for the animation and energy of the language, the irresistible force of the reasoning, the virtuous glow and genuine dignity of the sentiments. He said, he had come down to the house, on that day, full of the most anxious curiosity, to know what turn the discussion would take, and what line of conduct ministers would follow. It was his wish to have heard them, when they had already shifted all blame from themselves, give some sort of evidence or argument why it ought to be attached elsewhere. That blame did exist somewhere the notorious fact of the noble earl's recal fully demonstrated; and the public had a right to be satisfied on the subject. The noble earl had fairly, boldly, and honourably courted an investigation into his conduct;

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and it equally became his majesty's cabinet ministers to be ready, on their part, to meet the noble earl's challenge, and put the house in possession of such information as might enable them to form a right and true judgment upon the question now so notoriously at issue between them and the noble earl. What could have actuated ministers in this business, he could not ascertain, if he looked to public advantage: but certain it was, that the noble earl in question was given up, basely given up. It was asked, *What was the benefit of such an inquiry?* He would put a case in answer: when a man was prosecuted for forgery, it was not so much for public benefit, as for public example: in the same way was the present business: he wished to lay down an example that might hinder such mischief in future: he wished, then, to ascertain where the blame lay, —whether it attached to an individual, or to his majesty's cabinet.—The union and harmony of Ireland, in its relative situation to this country, was so desirable an object, that, as every thing which tended to promote that union and harmony was the best interest of this country to encourage, so every thing that tended to interrupt it was most dangerous in its consequences, and studiously to be avoided. He deprecated an idea, which had been repeatedly thrown out, that any investigation of the nature proposed was a direct interference with the legislature of Ireland: he thought, on the contrary,

trary, it was what that country looked for, and had a right to expect: it was a question, in which the interests of both kingdoms were involved, and which it was the duty of both to see fully and fairly investigated.—As to the prerogative of the crown, and the power of appointing and dismissing servants at pleasure, while he readily admitted the just extent of the argument, he still must insist, that, in extraordinary cases, the manner in which that power was exercised might become a very proper subject of inquiry; and if ever there was a case where sound discretion called for investigation and a recognition by parliament of the exercise of such prerogative, it was that now before the house. This was no common dismissal of a secretary of state or any ordinary minister of the crown; neither were its consequences so trivial and unimportant. He begged their lordships to consider the extremely critical situation of Ireland at the time the noble earl was appointed, the great satisfaction his intended measures had given to that country, and the unanimous support he had experienced from the parliament and the people; and then let them observe the extraordinary and unprecedented circumstance of the noble earl's being withdrawn from the government of that country in the midst of the most important business that could occupy the attention of that kingdom, and when he had just proposed, and was carrying on measures so tru-

ly honourable to himself, so auspicious to the interests of Ireland, and so conformable to the wishes of people of all descriptions both there and here. Under such circumstances, could this be reckoned an ordinary dismissal? or rather, were there not such serious consequences involved in it, as demanded every possible investigation, and every explanation that could calm and satisfy the public mind? Much shyness appeared in some quarters, about intrenching upon the delicacy of the subject, and the noble earl's feelings; but such observations, in his mind, came with a very bad grace from ministers now. What delicacy could they pretend to, after the manner in which they had treated the noble earl? The very circumstance of recalling him, in the way they did, carried with it a degree of disgrace and supposed criminality, which no delicacy now, nor any thing but a fair inquiry, could possibly do away. The noble earl had come forward with his facts, and was ready to defend himself in his place: let them stand up likewise in their own defence, and prove to the house and to the country, that blame was not imputable to them. The noble earl had asserted, that the catholic question was not the cause of his dismissal: he was ready to answer for all the other measures of his government, equally tending, as they did, to the satisfaction, the tranquillity, and the prosperity of the country. If their lordships would but think

think for a moment on the noble earl's situation personally ; if they recollected his own stake in that country, his great estate, his high rank, and still higher reputation, and the wish he must have felt to preserve unsullied that character and estimation in which he was so justly held ; could they, for an instant, suppose that his conduct was dictated by motives of vanity or ambition ? Certainly not. “ It must be visible to all,” continued lord Moira, “ who are able to make such observation on the subject, that it was not momentary popularity, but a conviction that he was acting for the welfare and security of the country, which induced him to follow those measures best adapted to secure both. One leading feature in his administration was an early and uniform disposition to correct, by every possible means, those violent abuses, which were known to have prevailed in former administrations,—which could not be denied,—and which had disgraced and degraded not only those who committed them, but the very name of the country in which they were suffered to exist. As for me, though I have great landed property in Ireland, I considered the supporting of the noble earl in his laudable purposes as the best security for the establishment of my estates. The glorious intention of the noble earl was to correct those abuses which disgraced the nation. *Here corruption bides her odious head in shame ! There she stalked abroad in open day*

day with bold and wanton strides ! It was the pride and the praise of earl Fitzwilliam, that HE WOULD BANISH THE PROSTITUTE FROM THE LAND SHE HAD SO LONG INFESTED." [Lord Romney called the noble earl to order, fearing such language might be received as an insult upon the legislature of another country. The earl of Moira proceeded thus :] " Animated, as I felt myself by my subject, and possessing such complete knowledge of the facts I stated as I do, I may, perhaps, have been betrayed into a warmth of expression that induced the noble lord to call me to order,—no doubt justly. I shall therefore endeavour to keep clear of the same fault again ; though, from my conviction of the truth of my statement, I must think that the part of the noble earl's system, to which I alluded, was one of the most important, most material, and most salutary measures of his administration. On the subject of the corruption which has for a long time been said to prevail in Ireland, I am not merely giving my own opinion : it has long since roused the general and glowing indignation of the whole country, being as notorious as it is uncontradicted."—Here his lordship disclaimed any wish to insinuate what might even look like a censure on Mr. Beresford, whose removal from office he at the same time thought necessary.—He differed widely in opinion from those noble lords, who had asserted, that the present state of
Ireland

Ireland bore no symptoms of dissatisfaction :— though the people did not break out into violent insurrections, their silent disgust tended more to interrupt the union and harmony necessary to the true interests of the two countries. Besides, the proceedings at all public meetings, the resolutions adopted even in those parts of the country where the protestants had the ascendancy, and the addresses to the throne which had poured in from every quarter, shewed the universal alarm and dissatisfaction of the people at the late recal. Was it prudent, when they had given us great additional and effectual support, in return, for a promised boon, to shew them how little they were to depend upon our justice,—how much they had to dread from our indiscretion?—His lordship, towards the close of his speech, addressed himself to those who spoke so highly of the noble earl, and denied that any charge was made against, or any blame attached to him ; and asked them, if there was no disgrace, no dishonour in his recal, under the circumstances, and at the time it took place ? He considered that way of speaking extremely wrong ;—mere vain compliments thrown out as a set off against serious and substantial charges.—He pronounced a handsome panegyric on the public and private character of the noble earl, with whom he declared he had held no communication as to the part he had taken that night : and if ministers
refuted

resisted all inquiry, and refused information on the question at issue between them and the noble earl, he must attach to them all the blame which they had hitherto wished to load the noble earl with; and, what would fall more heavily upon them, all the dangerous effects that were to be dreaded from their indiscretion.

XLVIII. It was a trick often played off against the late earl of Chatham, when he delivered any of those masterpieces of eloquence which precluded the possibility of a fair reply, for the most blundering fool in the house to start up, and to throw all the topics of debate into confusion by a jumble of the most incoherent nonsense. One of the agents, who used to be employed on such occasions, is still living. His name we shall suppress,—not from motives of delicacy,—but because he is really too contemptible an object to direct against him the flashes of public indignation. The present minister has constant recourse to the same despicable artifice in making out *the cast of parts* for the several performers on both the parliamentary theatres. Thus we have seen, in the grand debate on Mr. Fox's motion, Mr. Sheridan immediately followed by such a babbler as Canning; and now again, in another discussion of the utmost importance, the earl of Westmorland starts up after the earl of Moira. But the pages of history must not be stained with the futile remarks, the malignant personalities

personalities, and the silly, disgusting egotisms of the former. It is enough to say, that they were answered and exposed with becoming spirit by lord Fitzwilliam, whose only wish was that the whole truth in this business might come before the public.

XLIX. Lord Grenville had *reasons of state* for declining the discussion. Such inquires as those now proposed would tend to establish *a committee of public safety, or something worse*. The duke of Portland, with a few more of his new associates, expressed their concurrence in the same opinion; and paid little regard to what was farther advanced in support of the motion by the earl of Lauderdale and the duke of Bedford. On the question for the address being put, the contents were only 25, the not contents 100.

L. On the nineteenth of the same month, a similar address to the king for the essential parts of the correspondence between his majesty's ministers and the late lord lieutenant of Ireland was moved for in the house of commons by Mr. Jekyl, whose uncommon powers of argument and eloquence were exerted in such a manner as to charm and convince any audience,—but the *deaf adders* of prostitution and venality. The detail of facts, though they had been so often made the subject both of public and private discussion, he rendered peculiarly interesting by the ingenuity of his re-

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marks. The question of catholic emancipation he considered as a mere stalking horse assumed by ministers for the purpose of momentary delusion, while the real ground of dispute was the dismissal of the Beresfords. Earl Fitzwilliam had pleased the great body of the people in Ireland; but he had displeased Mr. Beresford and his friends. Thus, when the people of Ireland were put into one end of the scale, and Mr. Beresford with his family into the other, the scale lost its balance,—the people, with all their weight, flew up, and the interest of Mr. Beresford preponderated.—On the earl's recal, after having been made a party to the deception practised on the Irish nation, Mr. Jekyl observed, that the cabinet ministers had no sooner determined upon the measure, than they chose the duke of Portland as the fittest instrument of their cruel and insidious policy, to wound the fame and the feelings of his friend. It was not enough simply to murder the noble earl's reputation, but the hand of a friend must be directed to plunge the dagger in his bosom.—Mr. Jekyl was no less pointed in his strictures on such a series of gross duplicity and of scandalous dupery,—on the dangerous impolicy of offending the Irish,—on the frivolity of the plea of prerogative, when set up as a bar to just investigation,—and on the disgrace which must attach to the chancellor of the exchequer, if he now set his face against all inquiry,

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after having solemnly promised the house, on a former night, *that whenever the subject of Irish affairs came to be discussed, he would undertake to prove that no blame attached to the ministers of this country.*

LI. It may urged in excuse for Mr. Pitt's forgetfulness of a promise made on a former night, that he has *a very weak and very short memory*, as appears from his testimony and examination at the *Old Bailey* on the trials for *pretended conspiracies*. It is, indeed, rather unfortunate, that his powers of recollection are observed to fail at the exact moment when they should remind him of any engagements he may have entered into for promoting national reform or public justice. But his ingenuity always comes to his aid in the house of commons, and enables him to explain away what others may impertinently remember for him. Thus he got rid of the promise to meet investigation, by saying, *he had merely stated, that whatever mischief arose in Ireland, no part of it could be attributed to his majesty's ministers here*: and, with respect to the grounds upon which the present inquiry was called for,—the justification of earl Fitzwilliam, and the public interest of both kingdoms,—he thought the first a mere assumption, and the latter a subject, the discussion of which properly belonged to the parliament of that country, where any difference of opinion was said to prevail. Though the minister was very sparing of

words in direct reply either to facts or to inferences drawn from them, he was very lavish of splendid declamation; and after a long debate, in which Mr. Fox and Mr. Grey took a distinguished part, an appeal to numbers decided the business. The order of the day, which had been moved by Mr. Powis, was carried, and Mr. Jekyl's motion consequently set aside, by a majority of 188 against 49.

LII. When inquiries into the causes of past disasters, or of present convulsions or discontents, were so easily quashed in both houses, it cannot be a matter of surprise that the minister should find as little trouble in obtaining the most liberal supplies for the prosecution of his future measures. Whatever may have been his reasons for not suffering the late parliament to die a natural death, he cannot at least reproach them with having been either inquisitive or niggardly. Almost at the opening of the session (Jan. 7) a hundred thousand seamen were voted for the service of the current year. The necessity of putting the navy upon a respectable footing could not be denied; but it was justly observed, that our maritime exertions had been very much obstructed by an ostentatious display of zeal in the land service. This, in fact, still seemed to be the principal object; for in a fortnight after passing the former vote, a motion was made for the employment of 119,000 men in the army, the
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expence of this force being estimated at 6,652,742l. In the debate, to which the motion gave rise, the minister assumed the lofty insolence of triumph, when he should have descended to the lowest tones of humiliation. To assert "that there never had been a war in which, after two years hostility, the aspect seemed so flattering and prosperous," was an insult to the feelings, the distresses, the disgraces of his country. But neither the wanton sacrifice of so many thousands of our brave men who had been slaughtered in Germany, who had languished in French prisons, or had fallen inglorious and without a wound in the charnel-houses of the West, nor the shameless abuses in the recruiting service, nor the injury which the navy was likely to sustain from such an augmentation, could operate as a check on the profusion and credulity of the house of commons. The resolutions, just as the minister thought proper to dictate them, were agreed to, and bills were brought in and passed accordingly.

LIII. Stung by the incessant reproaches of the minority, and almost put to shame at length by the glaring evidence of past neglect, Mr. Pitt, on the second of February, brought forward a new plan for manning the navy by requisition. He looked to the mercantile marine as his chief resource, and proposed that no vessel above thirty-five tons burthen should be permitted to clear outwards

wards from any port in the kingdom, without having contributed to the supply of the navy in the following manner: every vessel of 35 tons burthen, and up to 70, was to find one landman; every vessel from 70 to 105 tons was to find one seaman or two landmen; and so on to 140 tons; and all above that number to find one landman progressively for every 50 tons. The whole number to be obtained this way he computed at between eighteen and twenty thousand. A farther supply of 10,000 men was to be raised by contribution from all the parishes in the kingdom, each furnishing its regular quota. He also intended that a certain number of hands should be taken out of those who were employed in the inland navigation; but he could not ascertain the probable amount of this supply, till he had procured a list of the barges: a bounty of twenty pounds was to be paid for each man, and the expence of the requisition to be defrayed by the nation. A clause was added for authorizing magistrates to apprehend all idle and disorderly persons who might be able to serve his majesty. This plan, with a few modifications, soon received the sanction of parliament. Its vast expence to the country, its partiality and oppression, and, what is worse than all, its inefficiency, have since been proved; and the practice of impressing men, that reproach on the wisdom of government, as well as outrage on the boasted liberty

berty of Britons, has not been in the smallest degree abated.

LIV. On the twentieth of the same month, parliament was called upon, and did not fail to attend to the call for granting £.3,063,968 to defray the extraordinary expences of the land forces in the preceding year. To say nothing of such an addition to the immense supplies which had been voted for the service of that year, the statement itself contained a variety of the most exceptionable articles,—half a million laid out in building barracks;—four hundred thousand pounds of extra expenditure at Toulon;—sir Gilbert Elliot's salary, as civil commissioner in France, which was continued to him after the evacuation of Toulon till his appointment to the vice-royalty of Corsica, besides a large sum for his plate and equipage, though chargeable only upon the civil list;—£.15,000 paid to colonel Fullarton, a member of the house, for services performed fifteen years ago;—and bills of Mr. Brook Watson's for unaccounted millions! But the committee of supply were so little staggered either by the amount, the unreasonableness, or the frequency of these and the like demands, that they soon after voted almost half a million more for raising a corps of emigrants; and the representatives of the British nation acquiesced in the measure.

LV. In order to provide for the various sums
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thus voted or estimated, amounting to somewhat more than twenty-seven millions and a half, the chancellor of the exchequer opened his budget, on the twenty-third of February. The ways and means, which he proposed, were the two permanent taxes of land and malt, affording annually £.2,750,000; the growing produce of the consolidated fund from the fifth of April 1795 to the fifth of April 1796,—£.2,235,000; imposts monies to be repaid, £.160,000; from the East India company half a million; three millions and a half of exchequer bills; and a loan of eighteen millions; making in all £.27,145,000. But, *as the East India company might not be able to pay the sum*, for which credit was given them in this statement, the minister undertook to provide for a million of probable deficiency, beyond the loan of eighteen millions. The interest of the debt so incurred would amount to £.1,637,000, which was to be defrayed by the following taxes, viz. an additional duty of twenty pounds a tun, or about sixpence a bottle on wine, £.500,000; an advance of eight pence on every gallon of rum, ten pence on every gallon of brandy, and one penny on British spirits, £.259,000; an increase of the duty on tea from £.12 10s. to £.20 per cent, £.180,000; a farther duty on coffee and cocoa, £.40,000; a small advance of the import duty on raisins, lemons, oranges, fallad oil, and silk, and
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of the export duty on coals and rock salt, £.77,000; an addition of one eighth per cent to the tax on insurances for ships and cargoes, £.130,000; a new tax on life insurances, £.30,000; but this was afterwards withdrawn by the minister, who said that the deficiency would be more than made up by the produce beyond the estimate of the increased duty on spirits in Scotland; an additional duty on deals and fir, £.110,000; an increase of the stamp duties on affidavits, writs, agreements, probates of wills, and receipts, £.68,000; a limitation of the privilege of franking, by which it was thought probable that the revenue would be benefited to the amount of £.40,000; and lastly, a new tax of a guinea a head on every person who wore hair powder, which was calculated to produce £.210,000. All these resources afforded collectively £.1,645,000, or £.8,000 a year more than the sum wanted; and the minister did not fail to recommend the whole scheme by a flattering picture of the situation of the country, and a proud boast of the facility with which he could provide for the support of so *just* and *necessary* a war. The voices of a few members were raised in vain to expose the fallacy of his assertions: every point was carried; and all the proposed resolutions, with very few amendments, were finally sanctioned by the several branches of the legislature.

LVI. Those who know very little of Mr. Pitt, would afterwards be much surprised at his having expressed any doubts of *the ability of the East*

India company to pay their half million towards the public service, when it appeared from the statement of their affairs, as laid before the house by Mr. Dundas on the sixteenth of June, that they were in a better situation by the sum of almost a million and a half in March 1795, than at the time of winding up their accounts in the preceding year. But such inconsistencies are very familiar to the close observers of the language and conduct of both these right honourable gentlemen.

LVII. Enormous as the above grants must be deemed, the minister knew very well that they would not be sufficient for all his purposes, and therefore soon procured a vote of credit for two millions and a half more, to meet the farther exigencies of the year. But this was not all: the emperor wanted a loan of four millions six hundred thousand pounds, to enable him to act with greater effect against the common enemy; and his tottering credit was now to be propt up by the faith of the British parliament. All the powers of the minority, or rather, it may be said, the utmost powers of human genius and of human wisdom were called forth, though without effect, in opposing such a treaty. The rashness and impolicy of continental engagements were placed in the clearest light: the late example of Prussian perfidy was pointed out as a warning against similar deceptions: various proofs were cited of the emperor's inconsistency and bad faith: the conduct of the Austrians before Tournay, the precipitate evacuation

tion of the Netherlands, the surrender of the captured fortresses, and the base desertion of the common cause in the retreat from the Dutch frontiers, when the British and the allied forces were in a situation of the greatest peril, and when a delay of only twenty four hours on the part of the Austrians would have been of essential service, yet was refused by his Imperial majesty, all concurred to demonstrate the madness of purchasing the *forlorn hope* of his army at such a price: his power and his inclination to fulfil the engagement were equally doubtful: as little reliance was to be placed on his punctual discharge of the interest, for which, as well as the principal, the public faith was to be now pledged, and which this country was bound to make good, however dishonourable the emperor's future conduct might be: it was on his part a mere shew of borrowing money, the return of which it would be childish to expect: even during the debates on the subject, fresh instances occurred of his duplicity and weakness: he sent a rescript to the diet, declaring his readiness to make peace with the French republic; and the very same day he signed an agreement to accept the loan from England, on the express condition of prosecuting the war with every degree of vigour: the loss of Luxemburg shewed what little vigour he could exert even in defence of one of the most important fortifications in Europe. Yet in a few days after that event, and in the face of all these arguments, the bill for guaranteeing the interest

of the loan was passed in the house of lords, having been previously carried through its several stages in the house of commons.

LVIII. Ministry had a far more specious and a more popular pretence for bringing in a bill, about the same time, to enable his majesty to direct the issuing of exchequer bills, to the amount of a million and a half, for the accommodation of the merchants trading to Grenada and St. Vincent's. A petition in their behalf was presented by lord Sheffield, on the eleventh of June, stating that, in consequence of insurrections and other distresses, they were much injured in their property, and reduced to great inconveniences in their commerce; and praying relief. This relief, being recommended by administration, was easily obtained, though liable to very strong objections. The ground of the petition was one of the various calamities entailed by the war, which, if continued, would render aids of the same nature repeatedly necessary. Such grants tended also to increase the influence of the minister with commercial people; for these, being naturally apprehensive of some shock to their own credit, in order to secure parliamentary aid in their embarrassments, often sanctioned with their voices what they disapproved in their hearts.

LIX. It is much to be lamented, that, at the moment the nation was sinking under the pressure of so many burthens, the marriage of the prince of Wales, an event naturally calculated to inspire the people with joy, should be followed by circumstances

stances which were likely to chill all the ardor of their loyalty and affection. The princess of Brunswick arrived in England on the fifth of April; the nuptials were celebrated on the eighth; and, on the twenty-seventh, a message from his majesty was delivered to both houses, expressing his reliance on the liberality of parliament, and on their readiness to concur in such provision as they might judge necessary for the establishment of the prince of Wales, and for the gradual discharge of his incumbrances. This second application to the public to pay the debts of his royal highness, after a solemn promise had been made that no future debt should be incurred, was a dreadful shock to the confidence of the nation. It was also thought rather unseemly, in times of general distress, that his majesty should be the only person in the kingdom who did not contribute a farthing on the occasion, as if his ministers had dissuaded him from embracing so glorious an opportunity for the display of paternal regard, and of royal munificence. Various expedients were suggested by the best friends both to their prince and to their country. On the principle that royal embarrassments ought to be paid out of royal resources, some proposed an alienation of so much of the crown and forest lands as would discharge the prince's debts: others asserted, that the nett proceeds of the duchy of Cornwall during the prince's minority ought to be claimed and applied to the purpose: the advocates for œconomy were of opinion, that the greatest degree

degree of dignity, which could be reflected on the person and character of the prince, would be by a temporary retirement and a diminution rather than an increase of court trappings and splendor : and Mr. Sheridan advised the forming of a sinking fund out of the revenues of useless offices, which, after the death of the present holders, and as they fell, gradually, should extinguish the principal : this, he said, would be of service to posterity,—would make our constitution stable,—and would add lustre to the crown, unless, indeed, ministers might think that it shone brighter in proportion to the gloom that surrounded it, and that a king was magnificent as his subjects became miserable. Mr. Pitt did not avail himself of any of those hints. His plan, to which the majority in both houses gave their assent, fixed the burthen on the nation, the prince's income being thereby increased from 60,000*l.* to 125,000*l.* per annum, of which 65,000*l.* with the revenue of Cornwall amounting to 13,000*l.* a year, were to be set apart, and vested in commissioners for the gradual discharge of the prince's debts, estimated at near 640,000*l.* About 60,000*l.* more, to defray the expences of the marriage, of jewels and plate, and of finishing Carlton house, were also provided for ; and a jointure of 50,000*l.* a year was to be settled on the princess of Wales, in case of his royal highness's demise. The passing of a bill, at the same time, to restrain future princes of Wales from incurring debt, served only to excite the sincerest concern in the minds of the people

people that such a preventive had not been much sooner adopted.

LX. While “the flippery sycophants of the court” were thus eager to manifest their zeal for the support of princely magnificence, the distresses of the people seemed to be unfelt by the hearts of their representatives. The fatal effects of the war, the death-blow it had given to trade and industry, the immense quantities of provisions which had been sent out of the kingdom, the failure of the harvest of 1794, not answering the sanguine prospects at first entertained, and the rigours of the following winter, in this country almost unprecedented in its severity and long continuance, rendered the condition of the poor unusually afflicting. They derived but a very precarious relief from the efforts of private charity, and the parade of public contributions. The attention of the minister and his friends was so wholly taken up with other matters, that they could pay little regard to the cries of poverty and famine; and though the alarming scarcity was often mentioned in the house of commons by several members of the minority as a subject which deserved the most serious consideration;—though the people had in many parts of the country been goaded by hunger to acts of violence and outrage;—yet ministry thought it sufficient to prohibit the exportation of all grain from Scotland, and to permit the importation of grain and all other articles of provision into England duty free.

XLI.

LXI. A detail of the other business of the session, to which his majesty put an end on the twenty-seventh of June with the usual acknowledgments, would prove very uninteresting after what has been already noticed. The acquittal of Mr. Hastings, or the speeches of Mr. Halded in favor of a poor lunatic, might afford, in a moment of more tranquillity, some matter for curious observation; but they sink into insignificance in the great mass of national concerns. The protuberances of parliamentary guilt are the chief objects on which the writer now wishes to fix the attention of his fellow-subjects. Animated by the warmest zeal for his king, for his country, and for public justice, he would willingly hang up the memory of the late house of commons on the gibbet of eternal infamy; and he thought he could not more effectually accomplish that end than by a fair and forcible report of their own proceedings.

On the First of November will be published,
The SECOND PART of A PLAIN TALE, &c.

Containing a Sketch of the CAMPAIGN of 1795, and of the most memorable DOMESTIC OCCURRENCES of the same period, including the rise and progress of the LONDON CORRESPONDING SOCIETY, of which Lord GRENVILLE will be proved to have been virtually the Founder.



